DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 264 690 EC 181 339

TITLE Academic Talent, Volume 1, Numbers 1-4, Winter 1984-Fall 1985.
INSTITUTION Johns Hopkins Univ., Baltimore, MD. Center for the Advancement of Academically Talented Youth.
PUB DATE 85
NOTE 49p.
AVAILABLE FROM Johns Hopkins University, Center for the Advancement of Academically Talented Youth, Charles and 34th Streets, Baltimore, MD 21218.
PUB TYPE Collected Works - Conference Proceedings (021) -- Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Viewpoints (120)
JOURNAL CIT Academic Talent; v1 n1-4 Win 1984-Fall 1985

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Counseling Techniques; Creative Development; *Educational Needs; Elementary Secondary Education; *Gifted; Graduation Requirements; Parent Role; Program Descriptions; Summer Programs; Talent; Talent Identification; Textbooks

ABSTRACT

Three issues (1984-85) of the newsletter address issues related to gifted and talented education. Articles include a review of counseling aspects, a summary of a meta-analysis of educational acceleration, a report of a summer program for gifted and talented students by a participant, discussions of master teacher qualities, an examination of the value of assessment in educational planning for bright young students, an analysis of high school graduation requirements, pointers for young authors, an essay on the importance of information for creativity, a description of the University of Washington's Early Entrance Program, a discussion of watered-down school textbooks, an interview with educator Theodore Sizer, the need to revamp the high school's traditional structure, guidelines for parents on influencng their child's school to provide more challenging education to highly able students, and a summary of media strategies for the academically gifted. (CL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

ED264690

Academic Talent

Winter 1984-Fall 1985

Volume 1

Numbers 1-4

The Johns Hopkins University
Center for the Advancement of
Academically Talented Youth
Charles and 34th Streets
Baltimore, Maryland 21218

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

S. Cohn

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

EC 180 339

Academic Talent

Volume I, Number 1 | The Johns Hopkins University Center for Talented Youth (CTY) | Winter, 1984

RECEIVED FEB CEC

COUNSELING ISSUES: Questions Parents Ask About Their Academically Talented Children

CTY has recently added a new component, Counseling Services, to address a wider range of the needs and concerns of academically talented students and their parents. Peter Finlay, M.S.W., and Susan Johnson, M.C., have compiled the following responses to questions frequently asked by parents.

Q. ***How can I tell if my preschooler is gifted?***

A. It is difficult to determine precocity of mental development in youngsters of any age, and this is particularly true when working with very small children. As youngsters progress from infancy to the toddler stage and beyond, their emerging personalities are engaged in an effort to order and to understand the world around them. Healthy children, therefore, are typically extremely inquisitive, creative with words and objects, and eager to learn. Many children express interest in puzzles, music, storybooks and fantasy worlds. Very often the imagination serves as a testing ground for acting out stories or real-life situations that the child is trying to integrate into the behavioral repertoire. Concerned parents want to encourage and assist the healthy development of their children, but are often caught in a bind between "pushing too hard" and providing sufficient stimulation and challenge for them. Assessment is the most reliable means of determining whether development is typical or more advanced. Ability to read with comprehension at age three or four is a good indicator of readiness for testing. Appropriate assessment involves the use of standardized instruments that measure ability levels and skill development. (Intelligence testing is seldom appropriate because of the instability of IQ at young ages.) Testing should be conducted by an individual or service experienced with young children and well-versed in the selection and administration of tests, as well as in the interpretation of test scores for children of preschool age.

The practical implications of assessment lie in the determination of which, if any, curricular areas the child may begin to master at an early age. In addition, the assessment process may suggest the appropriate reading level. With the results of assessment, educational options such as early entrance to school or special programs can be discussed. All of these options, however, are dependent on the results of testing and on the interpretation of these test scores. Only with this information can parents make well-informed decisions about their child's talents and academic future. CTY's Assessment and Evaluation Service can provide families with the necessary information about the emerging levels of ability of any child who can read.

For children who cannot yet read, a parent may wish to consider:

- continuing to encourage the child's natural inquisitiveness into the "why" and "how" of his or her environment.
- keeping a record of key behavioral observations, e.g.

(Continued on Page 2)

A NOTE FROM THE PUBLISHER: Our First Issue

Academic Talent continues a tradition established first by *ITYB*, the Intellectually Talented Youth Bulletin published by the Study of Mathematically Precocious Youth at The Johns Hopkins University, and the ***Chronicle of Academic and Artistic Precocity***, published by the former Project for the Study of Academic Precocity at Arizona State University. In keeping with that tradition, the focus will remain on the education of young people with outstanding intellectual and academic abilities.

Typical issues will include: reports of recent research that will be of interest to academically talented youths, their families, and educators; descriptions of exemplary programs; anecdotal or biographical studies; and news items of general interest to people involved in education. Reviews of books, computer software, and other materials will also appear on a regular basis, as will notices of upcoming conferences likely to be of interest to our readership.

We hope to hear from our readers about local legislative action taken on behalf of highly able students, suggestions for books to be reviewed, and "first-hand" accounts of particularly valuable educational experiences. We welcome your submissions of manuscripts for articles on any of the above categories. Letters to the editor will also be published as space permits. (Readers of the former ***Chronicle*** should note that the "Puzzle of the Month" will be revived in the next issue of ***Academic Talent***.)

(Continued on Page 3)

Academic Talent

COUNSELING ISSUES:
Questions Parents Ask About Their Academically Talented Children ..... Cover

A NOTE FROM THE PUBLISHER:
Our First Issue ..... Cover

"THE PRICE OF EXCELLENCE":
May Sarton's *The Small Room*
by Gail E. J. Lipsitz ..... Page 4

A SUMMARY OF A META-ANALYSIS OF EDUCATIONAL ACCELERATION
by Sharon Higham ..... Page 5

WHAT KATE LEDGER, AGE 12, DID WITH HER SUMMER VACATION
by Kate Ledger ..... Page 6

EDITORIAL
What is a Master Teacher? ..... Page 8

INTERNATIONAL TALENT SEARCH ..... Page 9

COLLEGE OR CONSERVATORY: WHICH TO CHOOSE? ..... Page 9

THE VALUE OF ASSESSMENT IN EDUCATIONAL PLANNING FOR BRIGHT YOUNG STUDENTS
by Susan M. Johnson, M.C. .....Page 11

Academic Talent

Publisher:
Sanford J. Cohn, Ph.D.

Editor:
Elizabeth Bobrick Carter, M.A.

Editorial Assistant, Circulation Manager:
Gail E. J. Lipsitz, M.A.T.

Editorial Board
William G. Durden, Ph.D.
The Johns Hopkins University
Baltimore, Maryland

Linda B. Barnett, M.A.T.
The Johns Hopkins University
Baltimore, Maryland

Catherine M. G. Cohn, Ph.D.
The Johns Hopkins University
Baltimore, Maryland

Sharon J. Higham, Ph.D.
The Johns Hopkins University
Baltimore, Maryland

Peter M. Finlay, M.S.W.
The Johns Hopkins University
Baltimore, Maryland

Susan M. Johnson, M.C.
The Johns Hopkins University
Baltimore, Maryland

Academic Talent is published quarterly by The Johns Hopkins University Center for the Advancement of Academically Talented Youth, 34th and Charles Streets, Baltimore, Maryland 21218.

Counseling Issues

(Continued from Page 1)

successful attempts at understanding written words, particularly advanced drawings and/or play activities, especially astute observations and/or questions.

Q. ***My nine year old son, who was previously certified as gifted, was recently diagnosed as having dyslexia. What does this really mean and what can we do to help him?***

A. While it might seem that your son has been saddled with a burden of great difficulty, it must be remembered that, despite his diagnosed condition, he has also been certified as gifted. It is neither coincidental nor a contradiction that students who are very bright and who have serious reading problems can be identified as gifted. There are many valid tests of ability and achievement which do not require letter and word-based formats in order to yield accurate data, such as the Ravens Test of Standard Progressive Matrices, and mathematics tests that avoid the use of word problems. Remember also that the mind that yearns to achieve and overcome is capable of producing remarkably adaptive coping mechanisms which permit derivation of answers in non-traditional ways.

Dyslexia is a very general term which refers to an impairment of the ability to read. If the diagnosis of your son's condition is correct, it means simply that because of some quirk in learning and processing of information, he has learned to see and understand in ways different from most of the population. These differences are usually differences in perception of time, the way in which objects relate to each other, the relationship of cause and effect, and in what way they affect how people respond and react.

Dyslexia has varying degrees of seriousness. It may often be corrected swiftly, and even in the most difficult cases, dyslexia can still be greatly modified. I suggest that you consider three avenues of intervention to help your son. These should be coordinated so that they may have maximum impact on this condition.

You may wish to have your son assessed by an optometrist who does vision therapy or vision training. A specialist in this area will most likely suggest fitting your son with corrective lenses and guiding him through a course of visual retraining of his perception. A brief course of counseling may also help undo the effect of years of frustration in your son's life. Often, dyslexic children are teased by other children and even adults. Your son needs reassurance, and you may need strategies in order to support him while he goes through any changes. A thorough evaluation of the situation with your son's teacher(s) with a view to their plans to educate him as a bright student will be valuable. Your son should have a curriculum designed for him that is paced appropriately for his level of ability.

Q. ***Our twelve year old daughter, who is extremely talented academically, used to love school and learning. Recently, her grades dropped steeply, and she refuses to study. She says she hates being gifted and doesn't want good grades. Can you suggest ways to help us with her?***

A. Your letter sounds like ones I have received from many other parents of bright, early adolescent girls. I know that this doesn't change your present experience, but it is important for you to know that your situation is by no means an isolated one. When bright girls start to approach adulthood, they go through a series of biological and physiological changes that bring about certain social and emotional consequences. Your daughter, like so many girls her

age, is looking for ways to become a socialized young adult. Unfortunately, she believes the way to gain entrance to a social group is to deny her distinctive traits, intelligence and achievement. In general this denial takes the form of:

- a pouting, rebellious attitude
- withdrawal from family activities
- exploration of a wide variety of new social groups and experiences (often against parental approval)
- a desire to appear like the rest of the group, especially in the area of clothing and hairstyle
- a testing of family values and previous limits set by the parents
- a denial of their abilities as bright learners.

There are other consequences, but these seem to be the most common. The best response, initially, is to recognize that all of this is normal and acceptable. What becomes important is how you react and how much responsibility you allow your daughter to take in making her way through this time of life. It is important to begin including her in decision-making in those areas which affect her responsibilities and relationships. Also, she should participate in discussing—and accepting—the consequences of her actions, both good and bad. There are clear ways to get around this problem while preserving her academic abilities. Choices you have are:

- to redefine the current situation as an opportunity to help your daughter mature
- to accept her changes in behavior and attitude as a sign that the old have been well-learned by her and that new experiences in taking personal responsibility are needed now
- to provide social opportunities in the company of equally bright girls that will permit her to experience self-determination, decision-making, and self-confidence within reasonable and safe limits, while remaining in her natural peer group. This can be accomplished by arranging for your daughter to participate in a commuter or residential program for exceptionally able students. The Johns Hopkins University Center for the Advancement of Academically Talented Youth (CTY) has conducted such programs successfully since the mid-1970's. For information on such programs, please write this office.

Q. ***What may we as parents do to change school policies and programs that are having a negative effect on our bright child?***

A. From the late 1960's to the present, public education has become increasingly subject to changes brought about by political pressures. Regardless of their personal feelings about the propriety of this trend, parents of highly able children have a greater chance of bringing about change if they examine tactics that have worked for other interest groups in the recent past. This examination reveals three approaches, all to be implemented in coordination with one another.

1) Form and become actively involved in a parent advocacy group within your school. It is crucial that parents always approach local administrations from a position of numbers and unity. To do otherwise is to assure defeat!
2) Become a candidate for a leadership position in the local Parent-Teacher Association or on the Board of Education. This permits you or your candidate of choice to influence and possibly control budgets and resource distribution.
3) Develop lobbying efforts or fund-raising for the hiring of a professional lobbyist to pressure for recognition of and funding for the needs of gifted students.

If you would like further details on how to start and use these recommended methods, we can, as part of counseling services, act as consultants to assist you and other parents in your area who share your concern.

A Note From The Publisher

(Continued from Page 1)

Manuscripts for articles should be submitted to Elizabeth B. Carter, Editor, ***Academic Talent,*** CTY, The Johns Hopkins University, Charles and 34th Sts., Baltimore, Maryland 21218.

Please enclose the original copy and one photocopy of each submission. Also enclose a brief biographical statement so that our readers and contributors can become better acquainted. Please note that manuscripts cannot be returned unless accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

Academic Talent will appear four times a year: Winter, Spring, Summer, and Fall, usually in January, April, July, and October. All pre-paid subscriptions to Volume 3 of the ***Chronicle of Academic and Artistic Precocity*** will automatically receive the first volume of ***Academic Talent.*** New subscriptions will be available at the rate of $7.50 per year ($8.50 outside of Canada and U.S.). Questions about subscriptions should be addressed to Gail E. J. Lipsitz, Circulation Manager, ***Academic Talent,*** CTY, The Johns Hopkins University, Charles and 34th Sts., Baltimore, Maryland 21218.

"THE PRICE OF EXCELLENCE": May Sarton's *The Small Room*

by Gail E. J. Lipsitz

Why would a brilliant and hard-working student, the darling of her college's faculty, take a published author's work and try to pass it off as her own? Why would she thus jeopardize not only her graduation but her whole future? These are the questions raised dramatically in May Sarton's ***The Small Room*** (W.W. Norton and Co., Inc., 1961), a novel of special interest to those involved in the education of talented youth.

Senior Jane Seaman's plagiarizing throws Appleton College into turmoil. Lucy Winter, Jane's professor of English, plays a central role in deciding how to resolve the crisis. As she puzzles over the problem, Lucy realizes that the basic issue is "the price of excellence," and this is the main theme of the novel. A closely related theme is the complex relationship between student and teacher.

Upon arriving at Appleton, Lucy half-expected that a college valuing scholarship so highly "might have brought forth a group of cranks or creeps, girls in spectacles, girls who walk with their heads down, monsters of morose self-absorption and shyness." Many talented students will smile wryly in recognition of this stereotype. However, Lucy finds that Appleton's students appear to be "healthy and natural." Jane, who overshadows her peers in intelligence, is an exception; her case suggests the urgent need to look below the superficial performance of the extraordinary student.

Carryl Cope, a history professor of awesome reputation who has been Jane's mentor, points out that while teachers demand excellence of students, many don't know how to deal with it when they find it. "The price," she says, "is eccentricity, maladjustment, isolation of one sort or another, strangeness, narrowness."

When Jane breaks down under Lucy's questioning, it is clear that she blames Carryl for driving her to the point of desperation. Jane recalls arriving at college full of the desire to learn. But once the powers of her mind became evident, she was subjected to increasing pressure to produce. "The more you do, the more you're expected to do, and each thing has got to be better, always better." Comparing academic achievement to jumping successively higher bars on horseback, Jane admits she lost the joy of learning and "just got tired of being pushed so hard." In fact, it is a relief to have been caught, for once the cycle of pressure has been broken, Jane can be helped. How many students who have been labeled "gifted" can identify with Jane's feelings? How much responsibility must their teachers take for emphasizing academic performance to the exclusion of personal development?

The college faculty and administration are split by this question of responsibility for Jane's breakdown and for her future. Many wish to hush up the affair rather than expel Jane, and this creates resentment among the students, who are already aware of the incident. Another point of contention is whether the college should hire a consulting psychiatrist to help students like Jane. Finally, the student council, with the approval of some instructors, forces the matter into the open, with surprising results.

The process of resolving this situation highlights many facets of faculty-student relationships, but most importantly the question of whether the exceptional student should be treated exceptionally. Early in the novel, the faculty discusses Agnes Skeffington, another brilliant student who has neglected all her other courses to concentrate on mathematics. In defending Agnes, her professor says, "Mathematical genius is...unorthodox." Lucy marvels, "What extremity of being must exist in a young woman with such faith in herself!...She herself had never in her life been seized by anything as wholeheartedly as that." What of a student who is absorbed in writing a novel, another professor asks. Should she or he be allowed to postpone a term paper because it would interfere with that project? Bright students often fail to adhere to fixed rules and structures; how flexible should these guidelines be to allow them room for growth?

Another issue raised by ***The Small Room*** is society's response to intelligent women. One female professor at Appleton confides to Lucy: "In my heart of hearts I have to agree that the intellectual woman, as Dr. Johnson said of the woman preacher, can only be compared to a dog standing on its hind legs." May Sarton specializes in exploring women and their relationships; fortunately, in this novel, she shows a whole spectrum of intelligent women who belie Dr. Johnson's simile.

May Sarton's great strength in this novel is avoiding the oversimplification of the portrait of the talented student and the issue of academic honesty. All points of view are sensitively presented with awareness of their complexity. In addition, students, teachers, parents, and administrators may find this book of practical value. Students who have been wrongly or rightly accused of dishonesty could learn some appropriate responses from Jane's case; many may be surprised that a teacher would feel "dread and dismay" rather than glee or vindictiveness upon discovering plagiarism. The torn loyalties of teachers and administrators and their investment of energy and care for one student show the weightiness of the decisions they must make. Teachers, administrators and parents confronting the dilemma of how to react when the originality of a student's work is suspect could explore and benefit from the reactions of Sarton's characters. A student who has plagiarized might profit from reading this novel and discussing its implications with a teacher, rather than simply being punished without further considering the meaning of the act. Thus, ***The Small Room*** could launch a valuable

(Continued on Page 5)

dialogue among all participants in the educational process.

Reflecting on Jane's experience, Lucy realizes that "even the brilliant student, the paragon, must be watched and tended like a plant, now stimulated by water and sunlight, now placed in the shade temporarily!" What excellent advice May Sarton has given us to ponder and practice.

Gail E. J. Lipsitz assists the Deputy Director of CTY JHU. She has taught English for fifteen years in high schools and universities in the U.S.A. and France, specializing in literature about women. For the past three summers she has worked with the Elderhostel program in Baltimore, MD.

A SUMMARY OF A META-ANALYSIS OF EDUCATIONAL ACCELERATION

Sharon Higham, Ph.D

In an article titled "Effects of Accelerated Instruction on Students" published in ***Review of Educational Research*** (Fall, 1984, Vol. 54, No. 3 pp. 409-425), James A. Kulik and Chen-Lin Kulik report on the results of a meta-analysis of findings about the effects of accelerated instruction on elementary and secondary students. They found strong positive effects of acceleration on academic performance and no consistent negative effects of acceleration on affective factors.

Simply stated, a meta-analysis is an analysis of many related studies, considered together. Results from many individual studies are integrated in order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the issue at hand in statistically valid ways. Criteria are established that select the studies which are sound and similar in approach. Outcomes of the studies used in a meta-analysis must be presented in quantitative terms in order to make use of the techniques that allow the researcher to describe the findings of many studies considered together and to relate the characteristics of the studies to the research findings.

In this study, Kulik and Kulik located 21 reports which included 26 studies on the effects of acceleration that met the criteria established. These criteria included quantitative reporting of results and the use of comparison groups of subjects matched for intellectual ability. Thirteen of the 26 studies used same-age comparison groups and thirteen of the studies used older students matched for ability in the comparison groups. Either method of selection comparison groups is a valid technique. Individual studies included groups of students in second through twelfth grades, and examined various methods of acceleration, such as advancement in individual subjects as well as skipping one or more grades.

The 13 studies that used same-age comparison groups showed greater student achievement among students in the accelerated classes than those in the comparison groups. The results of the meta-analysis were interpreted to mean that approximately 81% of the students in the accelerated classes outperformed the typical student of the same age and the same level of intellectual ability in the comparison classes. As a result of the accelerative intervention, groups that had been matched for general intelligence differed from each other by almost one whole grade level.

Results of studies using comparisons with older groups of students have demonstrated that the accelerated students performed as well as older students with equivalent intelligence quotients. This is a particularly important finding because it indicates not only that younger students when accelerated are able to keep pace with older students in general, but are also able to keep pace with older students who are equivalent in intellectual ability.

The authors also investigated other non-intellective outcomes of acceleration. These issues of social and emotional development are often given much weight when decisions concerning acceleration are considered. Do accelerated students have psycho-social adjustment problems that cause emotional problems? This portion of the meta-analysis included assessment of attitudes toward school and school subjects, vocational plans, participation in school activities, popularity, and character ratings. The findings concerning the affective outcomes of acceleration were sketchy and inconclusive. Results from various studies were inconsistent, most likely because of variations in program emphases and data collection methods. This meta-analysis was, therefore, not able to shed new light on debates about the effect of acceleration on social and attitudinal outcomes.

Kulik and Kulik point out that, when compared to other educational methods (e.g. individualized teaching, homogeneous grouping, enrichment), the positive effects of acceleration on academic achievement are remarkable. The authors conclude that acceleration contributes substantially to the education of talented students. The meta-analysis was limited, however, in that it did not answer the question of whether the benefits of accelerated instruction endure into the adult years or have an impact upon success in life as measured by something other than a pencil-and-paper test. Disappointingly, the study did not find any strong relationships between particular methods of educational acceleration and specific outcomes. Some programs were more clearly effective than others, but this study did not elucidate those factors that contribute to the strengths of certain techniques. Kulik and Kulik point out that most studies reached favorable conclusions about the effects of acceleration on the education of talented students. Why then have programs of enrichment and grouping proved to be far more popular? For an answer to this question, Kulik and Kulik quote Getzels and Dillon (1973): "Apparently the cultural values favoring a standard period of dependency and formal education are stronger than the social or

(Continued on Page 6)

individual need for achievement and independence. This is an instance of the more general case one remarks through education: When research findings clash with cultural values, the values are more likely to prevail."

Sharon Higham is the Head of Science and Mathematics programs at The Johns Hopkins University Center for the Advancement of Academically Talented Youth. She has a Ph.D. in Special Education, specializing in education of the gifted and talented, from Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan.

What Kate Ledger, age 12, did with her summer vacation

She went to the Hopkins summer program for the verbally gifted, then sold the story to the ***Hopkins Magazine.***

by Kate Ledger

Reprinted from the ***Johns Hopkins Magazine,*** *Vol. XXXIV, No. 5, by permission of the author.*

My class sat, boy-girl-boy-girl (at our teacher's request, despite the groans) around four tables pushed together into a rectangle so we could easily see each other. All the students held copies of my essay that they had made notes on the night before for homework. I glanced around nervously, looking for some expression on the kids' faces, as I wondered whether they were going to "tear my article apart" in the crit session, but I didn't see any malicious smirks. They weren't going to pick my essay to bits. They weren't out to get me but to help me in revising.

"First, let's go around and say what we like about the article," said the student leading the discussion.

"I think the 'pathos' is good. You really feel for the main character," said one girl. (Susan Land, our teacher, had taught us that high-flown term in an earlier session.) The assignment had been a circular essay, where the ending winds up at the same place as the beginning. I had written about a man who never made it far in life, beat his son and slumped in his chair watching TV and drinking beer; the son ends up doing the same things when the father is killed by a delivery truck. I suppose she was referring to how hard the son took the father's death. I agree—it was good.

"I like the way she describes foam rubber 'proudly' sticking out of the arm of the chair," the next boy said. "I like the pathos, too."

They went around the table, each person (including Ms. Land) stating at least one thing that he or she liked. This was an effective way of seeing what wording people enjoyed and could relate to, what paragraphs conveyed an emotion that they could understand, what kinds of description made them see, hear, feel the scene that I had written. It was nice for the criticism to start out with the good points.

It was summer vacation, and most kids were in camp. What was I doing in school?

I was taking a writing course sponsored by the Johns Hopkins Center for the Advancement of Academically Talented Youth. It was held at Dickinson College, which looks like a park dotted with buildings and a small town (Carlisle, Pa.) attached. The program is what put me in this classroom with 14 other kids ranging in age from 12 to 15 and Ms. Land, a red-headed, slightly round, soft-spoken woman with freckly arms. She is a graduate of Bennington College and Johns Hopkins.

In my story, I had taken a few liberties with English by creating my own words to fit my needs. Phrases like "buttocks-y seat" appeared in my story. The class enjoyed this. "It really lets you see how the chair was molded like the father's body" was what they said about that. However, when I used the phrase "feeling his usual grisly" (I didn't think I needed to say "grisly self"), there were different opinions. Ms. Land liked it and said that it worked because slang was acceptable from the narrator, a nosey neighbor. Most of the class disagreed. They found it confusing and argued that it was not grammatically correct—"grisly" is not a noun. Someone said that I should insert quotation marks around the word so readers would read it as an exception. A few kids liked it. I was confused. Should I change it? Who do I listen to when critics disagree?

Ms. Land answered, "The final choice is up to the writer." The workshop helps the author see how things will go over with an audience, but it's really the writer's choice whether things stay in or get omitted. (In the end, I left my creation in the story.)

We went on with the session. I had written that the son's feet slumped on a cushioned footrest. One boy said, "Feet don't really slump."

Ms. Land agreed. "Also," she said, "the word *slump* implies an attitude. Feet don't have attitudes."

Because I was the writer of the essay, I was not allowed to say anything, but I was finding it hard to restrain myself from defending my piece.

"I think she over-personified the foam rubber and the beer cans," someone added.

I almost pulled my hair out.

My family and I had first heard about CTY and its courses when I was in sixth grade. My parents tell me they were skeptical about sending me to a program that stressed mostly academic advancement. It sounded too pushy. I was too young, then, anyhow. When I was in seventh grade, the guidance counselor at my school gave me some material about CTY, which I brought home. There were several subjects, including math, archaeology, and history. The writing course interested me, and my parents were somehow won over. Maybe it was my enthusiasm that did it—or maybe it was my agreement to pay for it myself (with my Bat Mitzvah money).

To apply, I had to take the College Boards and get at least 430 in the SAT verbal and above 40 in the test of standard written English. Not

(Continued on Page 7)

everyone from my school got qualifying scores. One of my friends did make it in with me and we were roommates at Dickinson. There was both a pro and a con to rooming with a close friend. I felt I had gypped myself out of meeting a new person with whom I would have to get along, but my friend and I got to know each other better. Together, she and I designed the official CTY T-shirt—an ivy or wisteria plant with leaves that parted to reveal the letters C.T. and Y. Our concoction won the design contest, and everyone was given a T-shirt.

What I found CTY to be was nothing like what my parents had been worried about. It was not limited only to classes and work, although, what with the classes for five hours a day, the writing assignments (more than one a day, on an average), the reading assignments, the study periods, the teachers, and the waking up at 6:00 a.m. to finish homework, it was a lot like school. However, we also had activities, movies, and dances on the weekends, counselors (that's what we called the adults who lived in the dorm and weren't our teachers), and a daily social hour, which made CTY seem a lot like camp. It was even a little like college because we were living in college dorms, had classes in a Victorian building we called "The Eyesore," and ate in a regular dining hall, which we shared with ballerinas from another program and the Washington Redskins. (They were in training.)

Before I went, I wondered whether the kids at CTY might be egotistical about their board scores and totally absorbed in their studies, but they were totally different from this asocial stereotype. There wasn't as much talk about the SATs as I had thought there would be. One boy refused to tell his scores to anyone because he felt he could do better. A girl who had gotten over 700 in verbal (out of 800) winced whenever people talked about her accomplishment. Most kids did talk about how they had done, but everyone had a deep mutual understanding that the scores didn't make much difference. (I'm keeping my scores to myself—not because I'm modest, but because they aren't so hot.)

There was as much boy-girl craziness as there would be in any other camp. The kids knew how to have fun out of class. Many were athletic. We had great volleyball tournaments with floors competing. A curly-haired girl I met playing softball and became good friends with gave me a tennis lesson and one in racquetball. I'm not a klutz and I've won letters in basketball and soccer, but we spent the hour chasing the balls, which I could not seem to hit in the direction of the court.

The adults had great rapport with the students. The teachers were always available to help during study periods, or just to talk. When I was working on a fictional story, Ms. Land met with me out of class to discuss what needed to be revised. The counselors were always interested in what we were doing. Laura Nash, our floor's counselor, kept asking, "How was class? How was class?" Things that could have been heavy-handed stayed casual. For instance, there were daily room inspections for neatness and cleanliness. When the parents heard about this at the parents' orientation meeting, they clapped and cheered, my mom and dad tell me. When the kids heard about it, they booed. But the inspections were easy-going. We made our beds and just scooped up our junk and threw it into the drawers.

The academics stayed the most important thing, by far. Ms. Land gave us interesting assignments which taught us new ways of seeing things. Certain words have moods, personalities, just by the way they sound, she said. For instance, there are "fat" words: sausage, chubby, bulge, jumbo. Once we got the hang of it, we made long lists. "Thin" words: pinstripe, pencil, skim, lacerate. "Ugly" words: vomit, gritty, ragged, slug, slime. "Soft" words: wispy, fluffy, hush, pastel, plush, cashmere. "Fun" words: asparagus, ambidextrous, polyurethane, Frisbee, buoyant. She then told us to write a short essay in class, using as many of these spirited words as possible. They were the makings of hilarious stories.

Ms. Land had read somewhere that students in crit sessions sometimes pay less attention to what they are supposed to be editing and more to what they think the teacher wants to hear. I didn't think there was much of this in our class, but she had ways to reduce what she saw of it. Instead of spoken comments, we made written ones on the papers. Ms. Land put the essays on the table and each of us picked up one at random, read it, and wrote in what revisions were necessary. When we finished, we did another one, and another, until all the essays had three critics. I guess it couldn't stop the obnoxious, insensitive remarks. Before this exercise was formally announced, there were written comments on one story like "This story proves you're a mental" and "You should see a psychiatrist." The student showed Ms. Land the paper after class. Ms. Land seemed upset and spoke to us the next morning. I don't think it happened again.

My favorite exercise was an all-day project on stereotypes. We were given a pretend newspaper article that was biased against some girls in a reform school (St. Dunster's), who had supposedly jumped and beaten up a teacher. We listed all the stereotypes of what the girls might look like, from the article. Soon we had a picture of a "Dunster girl." And we hated her. Then Ms. Land said, "Now that you've gotten all the stereotypes out of your system, each of you is going to *be* a Dunster girl." We took names and created histories that explained why we were in reform school. We found our feelings toward these girls had changed. We were learning not to be "functionally fixed," Ms. Land told us. She said that she borrowed the term from psychology and that it means seeing things from only one perspective. Finally, from our new point of view, we each wrote a letter to the editor who had printed the original biased report.

The St. Dunster's exercise liberated our class conversation to the point where we could talk about cursing and sex in our writing. The girls in the reform school probably would use

(Continued on Page 8)

rough language, and we used it in our letters to the editor. That opened doors that we had been too shy to think about using before.

Ms. Land changed too. In the beginning, when we first met, I could tell that most of the class wasn't sure she would be so great a teacher. She was a little nervous, and she didn't sound as though she knew that much about writing. (I think CTY was only her third job teaching.) As it turned out, we were wrong. When she loosened up, she moved from her large desk in front of the classroom to a chair around the table and sat among the students. This was pleasant. I wish my school were like this. On one of the last days, she read us two of her stories—but not for our critiques—and we appreciated how powerfully she writes.

At the end of the three weeks, we were given a course evaluation to fill out that also asked what we intend to do with what we had learned. I intend to apply what I learned about editing to my school newspaper, where I am the school news editor. Any day now, I will finish my fictional piece and send it off to ***Redbook*** (why not aim high?). And, oh yes, this article. I learned what makes good writing—not that it comes more easily just from one three-week course.

Not every CTY course might fit so smoothly into our real lives. Some people have the impression the CTY math students have trouble when they return to their schools, being ahead of their own grade level and behind the next—or ahead of anything the school offers. One friend of mine from school was discouraged from applying to CTY by one of the teachers, who convinced him that he wouldn't fit in when he came back. She may or may not be right. My parents twice ran into that complaint about the math sequence, once from a parent at another school. In fact, I want to return.

What the writing course did was launch me, set me in gear to think and compare and describe and act on criticism—skills that require regular oiling. Having taken the program doesn't mean that I'll be able to conquer every project I set out to do with ease; I found *this* article difficult to organize. But the program did help me find ways to collect my thoughts and observations and gave me a boost for setting them down on paper.

EDITORIAL

What is a Master Teacher?

Within the recent controversy over how to improve the quality of American secondary school education, there has been much discussion of officially establishing and possibly even certifying master teachers who would serve as role models to their colleagues and be awarded with merit pay. The discussion usually centers on such questions as what the official criteria for decreeing someone a master teacher should be, or the value and fairness of official role models and merit pay in teaching. Without getting into the (alas, all-too-necessary) minutiae of, for instance, what academic degree or degrees a candidate for master teacher must have earned, and at what sort of institution of higher learning, the number of years he or she must have taught, and under what variety of conditions, let us take a look at the fundamental question: What is a master teacher? What characteristics of learning and teaching should she or he have?

A master teacher is one who is so deeply involved with his or her particular field of learning that he or she can be said to *live* it. A master teacher approaches any subject with questions rather than answers or assumptions. A master teacher is always thoroughly prepared, but never insists that discussion be confined only to those subjects for which he or she is best prepared. A master teacher relies on students and fellow teachers of all ages—and even those of previous ages—for help and encouragement. A master teacher has confidence in his or her learning

(Continued on Page 9)

A student concentrates on Algebra at CTY's 1983 Summer Residential Program in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. In its 1985 Summer Program, CTY will provide special opportunities for young women interested in math and science.

as a firm foundation for further inquiry. A master teacher loves his or her subject and learning itself enough to want to share knowledge with others, not guard it jealously.

What the possessor of these characteristics must have in addition is the ability to communicate what he or she may know and the way to go about learning. This art of effective communication, to use a popular phrase, was once popularly known as the art of rhetoric.

Rhetoric did not always have its current connotation of deceptive sophistry. The term comes from the Ancient Greek verb meaning 'to sew or stitch together,' and this is what the rhetorician does; he or she puts together pieces of knowledge, information, and opinion into a well-fitting whole. The study of rhetoric began with a thorough acquaintance with the techniques and masterpieces of illustrious predecessors in the field, and combined instruction not only on speaking eloquently but on *speaking to one's particular audience*, whatever it may be. Anyone who has ever been in a classroom knows that even the most knowledgeable person who does not have an accurate sense of his or her audience cannot teach what he or she knows.

To be a master teacher, then, means to have knowledge, humility, skill, confidence, a sense of the tradition of learning, and a large amount of sympathy—literally, to refer to etymology again, the ability to 'feel with' one's listeners.

International Talent Search

The Johns Hopkins University Center for the Advancement of Academically Talented Youth (CTY) announces its second annual International Talent Search. Conducted principally through the U.S. Department of State Overseas and the U.S. Department of Defense Dependent Schools, the International Talent Search seeks to identify and develop intellectual talent throughout the English-speaking world community.

At this writing, 125 seventh-graders have registered to take the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) at their schools overseas, in England, Italy, France, Germany, Belgium, Taiwan, Japan, Egypt, Sudan, Nigeria, Swaziland, Haiti, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Zaire, Canada, Colombia, Venezuela, and Mexico. To qualify for the Talent Search, students must rank at or above the 97th percentile on either the math or verbal sections of national standardized tests routinely administered in their schools.

The International Talent Search was designed to provide English-speaking students living in foreign countries with the same educational opportunities open to their counterparts in the United States. Although attendance at CTY summer programs is not feasible for all who qualify through the International Talent Search, several students did participate in CTY summer programs this year, travelling to Pennsylvania and Maryland from Cyprus, Taiwan, Venezuela, and England. But whether or not students attend academic programs, they still receive the benefits of accurate and appropriate evaluation of their academic potential.

For more information on CTY's International Talent Search, please write: Mrs. Penelope Judson, International Talent Search, c/o ***Academic Talent.***

College or Conservatory: Which to Choose?

(Editor's note: *While the primary focus of* ***Academic Talent*** *is what its title implies, we recognize that many highly able students have strong interests in the arts. Therefore, we will from time to time feature articles such as this one, and we particularly encourage our readers to send us their ideas and articles on the arts for future issues of* ***Academic Talent.)***

Many students blessed with a high degree of both musical and academic talent learn to fit a full schedule of lessons, rehearsals, and performances into what is often an already demanding academic program. By the time they reach college age, they have sacrificed many hours to what may promise to be a successful career in music. Yet

(Continued on Page 10)

A joint study session at CTY's 1984 Summer Program at Tempe, Arizona.

at the same time, they find that they do not wish to give up their academic studies. For these students, the decision between college and conservatory can be an agonizing one.

What most clearly distinguishes the two kinds of institutions is the type of instruction. In a conservatory, almost all instruction is in music, while in a college or university the emphasis is on academic subjects. Most conservatories require some basic academic coursework, though not a great deal (except for singers, who must be able to speak several languages). Most colleges or universities offer instruction in music, and those that grant fine arts degrees allow major concentration in the field; but students who are exceptionally able in both areas may not be content with a smattering of one while having to focus almost completely on the other.

College and conservatory differ not only in areas of concentration but in atmosphere. Although many college students are highly competitive, and both internally and externally imposed stresses are always present, competition and the accompanying pressure are everyday facts of life in a conservatory. A constant emphasis on performance calls for a well-developed ego, something not always easy for young adults to attain. What is more, job prospects are considerably more dim for young musicians than for those entering other careers, a fact which adds to the pressure. One prospective student was told by a conservatory teacher, "If you can live without music in your life, don't go to conservatory."

But no matter how bleak the picture may be, many academically talented students feel that they indeed cannot live without music, and it is for them that the decision is most difficult. If you fall into this category, how should you go about deciding?

The first step is to interview at both kinds of institutions. Talk both to people who have been to conservatory and to those who decided not to go. Tell the admissions officers of the academic institutions you visit that you would like to speak to students there who are musically active. Be open with your teachers of music *and* academics about your dilemma. Ask your family's help in weighing the advice you are given. Read the catalogues carefully to see what courses are required and what extra-curricular activities are available. Most of all—and this is hardest—"know thyself." In what kind of atmosphere do you thrive? What kind of work would you be happiest doing? What sacrifices are you willing to make?

As with almost any endeavor, one can enter into these decisions with the qualifier, "If I don't like it, I can always switch to something else." This is true, but it should be remembered that the consequences may well be lost ground in either direction. A switch from conservatory to college will almost surely mean having to make up academic course work; likewise, students transferring from college to conservatory will have to meet that institution's requirements. Students who feel very unsure of their decision may wish to look into colleges offering strong music programs, or those that are associated with conservatories. This is a sensible compromise for undecided students.

Once the decision has been made, can students continue to pursue both interests, even in a limited way? Demanding programs of either kind will not leave much spare time for extra-curricular activities, but students who have grown up with a busy schedule can usually manage their time better than students who haven't. The adage, "The more you do, the more you can do" applies to this situation.

(Thanks to Eliza Lansdale, The Johns Hopkins University, '87, for her contribution to this article.)

Students work individually and consult with the instructor in CTY's Fast-Paced Mathematics program.

The Value of Assessment in Educational Planning for Bright Young Students

by Susan M. Johnson, M.C.

There is no substitute for proper assessment as the foundation and support structure of well-informed educational planning for bright young students. A thorough assessment summary provides the quality and quantity of information that enables parents and school officials to act on behalf of these students, curbing the loss of one of our nation's greatest resources.

Educators, when faced with eager learners, often hide behind myths that prevail regarding talent and social development. Prominent among these myths is the idea that special programs for the intellectually talented encourage an intellectual elitism that conflicts with the American democratic philosophy (Casserly, 1979; Cohn, 1980; Daurio, 1977; Fox and Cohn, 1980; George, 1977; Solano, 1977; Stanley, 1977). Further, as Gallagher (1979, p. 37) points out, many still believe that "talent is essentially indestructible," and that a laissez-faire educational policy regarding the intellectually able will allow talent to blossom when the time is right. In fact, however, equal opportunity for every individual to realize his or her potential is at the heart of democracy, and a policy of indifference toward the academically talented will certainly erode and possibly eliminate unusual ability (Daurio, 1977; Gallagher, 1979; Stanley, 1980a). Personality theorist Abraham Maslow (1970) lends support to the notion that people who are not allowed to reach their potential remain unfulfilled and unhappy. This need to realize one's full potential is particularly important to consider in the study of the academically talented. To settle for mediocrity when one is truly brilliant is not only a waste of a valuable resource, but a thwarting of the normal development of personality. Realizing, then, that academic neglect is destructive to bright learners, parents are often at a loss as to how they may encourage school officials to modify traditional academic progress on behalf of the intellectually advanced child.

The first step is necessarily the gathering of information about the child's levels of abilities and developed academic skills. Parents need this information so that they may recommend and discuss educational options with school officials and make well-informed choices about educational variables (Stanley, 1980b). With very bright young students, it is often difficult to make an optimal match between the student's abilities and curriculum in every academic area.[1] Based on specific assessment information, however, parents and educators can approximate this optimal match by combining school curriculum with supplementary programs. It is necessary to re-evaluate progress and options on a regular basis, and parents can do so if they have a clear understanding of their child's abilities and skills.

There are two types of assessment information that are critical to educational planning: information about the student's reasoning abilities, and information about the student's patterns of developed skills. The first type of information, regarding reasoning ability, describes potential, and is best obtained from a test that offers separate scores for quantitative reasoning ability and verbal reasoning ability (Cohn and Cohn, 1983). The second type of information, regarding academic skills, describes what a student has already learned in specific academic subjects. This type of information is best obtained from achievement tests in the areas of math computation, mechanics of writing, grammar and syntax, and reading. In gathering both types of information, out-of-grade level tests need to be used (Cohn and Cohn, 1983; Keating, 1975). This is necessary so that students are sufficiently challenged on their intellectual level. When grade level tests are used, bright students often reach the upper limits of scoring. This indicates that the tests are not describing the full range of academic development, and educational planning based on these scores is insufficient at best. Intelligence (IQ) tests are inappropriate for these purposes because of their lack of specificity and their irrelevance to specific curricular planning (Cohn, in press).

When testing is completed, parents should be given a copy of the test scores and a thorough interpretation of these results. In addition, parents should request a thorough error analysis of the achievement test results. This will enable the family to understand where the student is proficient and in what areas further instruction and practice are needed (Cohn and Cohn, 1983). This error analysis will also assist the parents in working with school officials to tailor an appropriate educational program. This program, ideally, allows the student to progress through curriculum according to his or her ability, while minimizing repetition of already mastered material. Discussion of the results of the ability assessment will help parents understand the learning potential that exists and the pace at which a student may be expected to proceed through academic material. Once parents have a thorough understanding of the assessment results, academic recommendations may be discussed and selected. Evaluative follow-up of academic satisfaction must be continual to ensure that the student continues to progress through his or her education at a challenging rate.

[1]The term "optimal match" was coined by the late Prof. Halbert R. Robinson, initiator and former director of the Child Development Research Group at the University of Washington, Seattle.

References

Casserly, P.L. (1979). Helping able young women take math and science seriously in school. In N.R. Colangelo & R.T. Ziffrin (Eds.). ***New voices in counseling the***

(Continued on Page 12)

(Continued from Page 11)

gifted. Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall-Hunt.

Cohn, S.J. (in press), Assessment of the gifted child and adolescent.

Cohn, S.J. & Cohn, C.M.G. (1983). Training guide for educational administrators. Report prepared for the Arizona School Administrators, Inc. Phoenix, AZ.

Daurio, S.P. (1979). Educational enrichment versus acceleration: A review of the literature. In W.C. George, S.J. Cohn & J.C. Stanley (Eds.), ***Educating the gifted: Acceleration and enrichment*** (pp. 13-63). Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Fox, L.H. & Cohn, S.J. (1980). Conclusions: What do we know and where should we go? In L.H. Fox, L. Brody & D. Tobin (Eds.), ***Women and the mathematical mystique*** (pp. 95-110). Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Gallagher, J.J. (1979). Issues in education for the gifted. In A.H. Passow (Ed.), ***The gifted and the talented*** (pp. 28-44). Chicago: The National Society for the Study of Education.

George, W.C. (1977). Discussion of barriers to education of the gifted: Attitudes and behaviors. ***Talents and Gifts,*** 19(4), 2-4.

Keating, D.P. (1975). Testing those in top percentiles. ***Exceptional Children,*** 41(6), 435-436.

Maslow, A.H. (1970). ***Motivation and personality*** (2nd ed.). New York: Harper & Row.

Solano, C.H. (1977). Neglect of the gifted child. ***Intellectually Talented Youth Bulletin,*** 5(10), 25-26.

Stanley, J.C. (1977). Rationale of the Study of Mathematically Precocious Youth (SMPY) during its first five years of promoting educational acceleration. In J.C. Stanley, W.C. George & C.H. Solano (Eds.), ***The gifted and the talented: A fifty-year perspective*** (pp. 75-112). Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Stanley, J.C. (1980a). A conversation with Julian Stanley. ***Educational Leadership,*** March, 1980, 101-106.

Stanley, J.C. (1980b). Manipulate important educational variables. ***Educational Psychologist,*** 15(3), 164-171.

Susan M. Johnson, M.C., was associated with the former Project for the Study of Academic Precocity (PSAP) at Arizona State University before joining the Center for the Advancement of Academically Talented Youth at The Johns Hopkins University as a member of Counseling Services.

Academic Talent
The Johns Hopkins University
Center for the Advancement of
Academically Talented Youth
Charles and 34th Streets
Baltimore, Maryland 21218

NON-PROFIT
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
BALTIMORE, MD
PERMIT NO. 1235

CTY C 000361
MS JANET DRILL
COUNCIL OF EXCEPTION CHILDREN
1920 ASSOCIATION DR
RESTON VA 22091

Academic Talent

Volume I, Number 2 **The Johns Hopkins University Center for Academically Talented Youth (CTY)** Spring '85

A New Dilemma for the Academically Talented Student

or

The High School Graduation Requirement Blues

By Sharon J. Higham, Ph.D.

The recent spurt of interest in promoting educational excellence in American schools has resulted in a spate of administrative measures designed to shore up sagging high school graduation requirements. Educational policy-makers at the local, county, and sometimes even state levels are moving to adopt new graduation credit standards. The conditions that have prompted these new rules are all too familiar: too many students find themselves in their senior year having already completed most of their graduation requirements, and perhaps following a schedule consisting of a few courses mandated for seniors, and previously avoided but required classes. Senior year is used merely to mark time, perfect one's social graces, take a low-paying part-time job, or too often, to get into trouble. 'Terminal senioritis' has been known to strike anywhere, despite the availability of worthwhile classes left unexplored because they aren't mandatory. This situation can be traced to the 1960's and '70's when graduation requirements were relaxed in the areas of languages, science, mathematics and the fine arts, and when, in many cases, the catalogue of course offerings was like a lengthy menu featuring mainly appetizers and desserts. Furthermore, students, parents, and educators alike soon began to notice that, although there was a marked difference in the effort put forth and the education received by students who were motivated enough to pursue a 'meat and potatoes' curriculum, the 'cream puff' majors were receiving exactly the same high school diplomas. (While one might advocate the desirability of a well-rounded liberal arts education for all students, the attitude toward education in many American communities relegates this dream to experimental status at the present time.)

Concerns about these inequities and the dissolution of the meaning and value of the high school diploma gave rise to the new academic diploma (but not in every school system). The requirements for the academic diploma are more rigorous and generally represent a return to a traditionally sound college preparatory curriculum, which includes increased requirements in mathematics, sciences, foreign languages and fine arts. Sometimes classes specifically designed for academically talented students are required. For instance, the Maryland State Board of Education is considering adopting a revised set of guidelines for high school graduation requirements. The new upgraded requirements for high school graduation include: English, 4 credits; Fine Arts, 1 credit; Mathematics, 3 credits; Physical Education, 1 credit; Science, 2 credits; and Social Studies, 3 credits. Requirements of the special academic diploma, called the Maryland High School Certificate of Merit, include all of the core courses listed above, plus one additional year of science. Also proposed is that students achieve a G.P.A. of at least 2.6, and that at least 12 of the credits be earned in courses designated as 'advanced'.

(Continued on Page 2)

A NEW DILEMMA FOR THE ACADEMICALLY TALENTED STUDENT or, THE HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION REQUIREMENT BLUES
by Sharon J. Higham ..... Page 1

GETTING INTO PRINT: A GUIDE FOR YOUNG AUTHORS
by Ben Reynolds ..... Page 3

EDITORIAL: TALENT AND CREATIVITY REQUIRE INFORMATION ..... Page 7

COLLEGE WITHOUT HIGH SCHOOL: THE UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON'S EARLY ENTRANCE PROGRAM
by Nancy M. Robinson ..... Page 9

WATERED-DOWN SCHOOL TEXTS WORRY PARENTS, EDUCATORS
(excerpted by permission from *The Washington Post*)
by Elsa Walsh ..... Page 10

"WUNDERKIND": THE ARTISTIC PRODIGY
by Gail E. J. Lipsitz ..... Page 14

ANNOUNCEMENTS:
Training Institute;
6th World Conference on Gifted Children;
CTY Reaches Out to Gifted Girls;
CTY Career Day Symposium .. Page 18

Academic Talent

Publisher: Sanford J. Cohn, Ph.D.

Editor: Elizabeth Bobrick Carter, M.A.

Editorial Assistant, Circulation Manager: Gail E. J. Lipsitz, M.A.T.

Photos: James Wade, Ph.D.

Editorial Board at The Johns Hopkins University Center for Academically Talented Youth:
William G. Durden, Ph.D.
Linda B. Barnett, M.A.T.
Catherine M. G. Cohn, Ph.D.
Sharon J. Higham, Ph.D.
Peter M. Finley, M.S.W.
Susan M. Johnson, M.C.

Academic Talent *is published quarterly by The Johns Hopkins University Center for the Advancement of Academically Talented Youth, 34th and Charles Streets, Baltimore, Maryland 21218.*

The contents represent diverse views and are not necessarily representative of the views of The Johns Hopkins University.

(Continued from Page 1)

The intended result is that more high school students receive a well-rounded liberal arts education, make better use of their time in school (eliminating time ill-spent in study halls or in classes where little is taught or learned) and that more students enter college better prepared than has been the case heretofore.

One must applaud these measures and the concerned students, parents, and educators who have worked to enact them. But the new rules and regulations may actually create a dilemma that could cause difficulties for the brightest, most motivated and capable students. If a high school requires that students take a large number of credits per year while in high school, distributed among certain academic areas, then students who have chosen to advance their education by taking extra classes outside of school, and who have accelerated their educational progress (compared to the sequence planned for the mythical 'average' student) may be at a disadvantage.

Take this example: Marcia (not her real name), a mathematically precocious but otherwise 'normal' youth, attended a university-based special program for high-scoring Talent Search participants. She took precalculus mathematics the summer before entering the ninth grade, successfully completing the equivalent of two years worth of mathematics. Upon entering high school, she took honors trigonometry and analytic geometry, earning an A, and followed with Advanced Placement BC Calculus, receiving the maximum grade of 5 on the AP examination. Having mastered all of the mathematics that her high school had to offer, she continued to advance her education in mathematics at the local university after school, where she also earned A's. Furthermore, she was able to take more advanced classes in her high school in other fields by using the time freed in her schedule that would otherwise have been spent in math classes. Marcia was receiving the maximum benefit from her high school's educational program. But at graduation time, she discovered an unforeseen problem: the rules for the academic diploma required that she take four mathematics credits at the high school. She had only taken two, having taken her other mathematics courses through the university-based summer program and at a local university. She was not to receive the special academic diploma despite the fact that, academically, she was one of the most outstanding students at the school.

"She was not to receive the special academic diploma despite the fact that, academically, she was one of the most outstanding students at the school."

Fortunately, the ending to this sad but true story is a happy one. After lengthy negotiations between Marcia's parents and school officials, it was decided that her university credits in mathematics could be accepted as high school credits. She would be allowed to graduate with her classmates and to receive the special academic diploma.

Each year, hundreds, if not thousands of highly motivated young people will face a similar dilemma. Sometimes it appears to them and their parents that the local schools are more invested in blocking than facilitating the education of highly able students. In order that Marcia's situation not be repeated, both individual students and school policy-makers should be well-prepared to address the credit/placement issue.

In the past, students in Marcia's situation have found that it is more important to receive appropriate placement than to have the course credit recorded on a high school transcript. Since it is pointless and counterproductive for an especially talented young person to repeat a class, the acknowledgement through placement of course work mastered outside of the local school has been crucial. Furthermore, in the past, academically talented students often have accumulated far more than the minimum number of credits required for graduation. But now, with new rules for high school graduation requirements being enacted in several states, the circumstances require that students, parents, and educators take careful consideration of the credit issue. It would be extremely unfortunate if *increased* academic standards and improved overall education for the majority of students resulted in *decreased* academic options and opportunities for the students who are most able and motivated.

For individual students wishing to enroll in courses requiring appropriate placement and/or credit in their local schools, the following course of action has proved to be most effective: The student should gather the course descriptions and all other pertinent information about the nature of the program and arrange for an appointment to speak with the guidance counselor, gifted/talented program coordinator or principal. At this meeting, graduation requirements should be discussed and a clear understanding of the placement and credit issues should be reached. The high school principal is usually the person who has the authority to make these decisions, but the support of classroom teachers and guidance counselors may be enlisted. It is wise to get the agreement in writing, so that the understanding is mutual, and appropriate high school personnel may be made aware of decisions made at the junior high or middle school level. In many school districts with students who have pursued

these special academic programs outside of their regular school, these issues are handled in a comfortable, accommodating and relatively routine fashion. In some cases, the student may be required to take the school's placement examination for a specific subject. The student who is successful in a rigorous academic class designed for highly talented students generally does very well on these teacher-made tests, particularly if the student is made aware of the areas required for review and study.

Educational policy-makers should be aware of these issues. While it is true that increased and more rigorous high school graduation requirements are an innovation that may benefit many students and help to raise the quality of education in general, it is also important to remember the special needs of the highly able. Understanding and flexibility are crucial. Students who accelerate their educations by mastering required course work at a pace more rapid than that set in a typical classroom may simply be seeking an education that is academically and intellectually appropriate for them. For most students, the goal is not to graduate and leave high school early, but rather to take advantage of the best courses and teachers that the high school has to offer. Furthermore, students are not damaged by gathering a few college credits while still attending high school. Indeed, it appears to make eminent good sense that the most able and motivated be allowed some access to college course work when they are intellectually and socially ready to do so. (This sort of maturity does not automatically arrive at the moment of presentation of the high school diploma.) In the current educational climate, most colleges and universities, including the very best, have special provisions that allow high school students to attend classes on a part-time basis. Partnerships between local schools and colleges should be built and/or strengthened.

If educational excellence is the goal, then increasing and adjusting high school graduation requirements can aid in the achievement of that goal. Improving the educational environment for the *majority* of students falls short of the mark, however. The opportunity for an excellent education should be within the reach of *every* student. Educational policy-makers, therefore, must thoughtfully forge the new high school graduation standards out of a metal malleable enough to conform to educational needs of all students of all abilities.

Sharon J. Higham heads CTY's Mathematics/Science Program, and holds a Ph.D. in Special Education from Wayne State University. Her most recent publication, "Gifted Adolescent Females Require Differential Treatment", appeared in ***Journal for the Education of the Gifted*** *(Vol. 8, No. 1).*

(photo: James Wade)

Young students' mathematics class at CTY/Arizona State University

GETTING INTO PRINT: A Guide For Young Authors

By Ben Reynolds, M.A.

Between you and your audience are editors who need your help to get you published.

Getting your work published should be simple. You put your writing into the hands of an editor who reads it and likes it enough to print it. But the reality of publishing is more complicated. You have to find the right editor and you have to get your work into that editor's hands, looking the way the editor wants it to look. Let me illustrate with some bad news and some good news.

Bad news: *The New Yorker* magazine's fiction department receives more than 40,000 manuscripts a year and publishes only two or three stories weekly. It's not hard to figure the percentages. More bad news: Often, the first person to read your manuscript is a "screener", justifiably bored, tired, and looking for an excuse to stop reading one manuscript and move on to the next. As their name denotes, screeners are paid to sift good writing from bad. The bad is rejected and the good is passed up the line, where the percentages for your being published greatly increase. These people read

(Continued on Page 4)

manuscripts from "the slush pile". Yes, that's what it's called. The "slush pile" is a mountain of unsolicited manuscripts, sometimes politely called the "over-the-transom file", since that is how these manuscripts used to arrive.

Good news: As a reader of unsolicited manuscripts—more on that later—my experience is that 90% of the people who submit manuscripts either can't write or haven't come up with interesting, original ideas. If you are in the other 10%, your chances of being read are vastly improved. The odds for getting published at *The New Yorker* are still not that good, but if you pick the right market, your chances will improve.

So, to get your manuscript published, you need to get it into the right editor's hands. These are some tips on finding your market and presenting your manuscript to increase its chances of being read.

Prepare a Professional Manuscript. Just as your teachers always said, neatness counts. Screeners and editors first notice how a manuscript looks. If it doesn't look professional, your chances go down. But "manuscript" is now something of a misnomer. To the Romans, a manuscript was something "handwritten." To today's editors, a real manuscript is a typescript. A professional manuscript is typed, double-spaced, with all four margins one-and-a-half inches wide. Use what publishers call "good weight" paper: 16 or 20 lb., white paper, 8½ x 11 inches.

What format should each page use? The first page should have your name, address, and phone number in the upper left corner. You're not required to put a title on your piece, but if you do, it should appear centered a quarter to a third of the way down the page. Skip four lines below the title and begin your story.

The other pages should have your name and the page number in the upper right hand corner. Try to put no more than twenty-five typed lines to a page, or you'll ruin your margins. Margins and the spaces between typed lines are where editors write notes and corrections to typesetters.

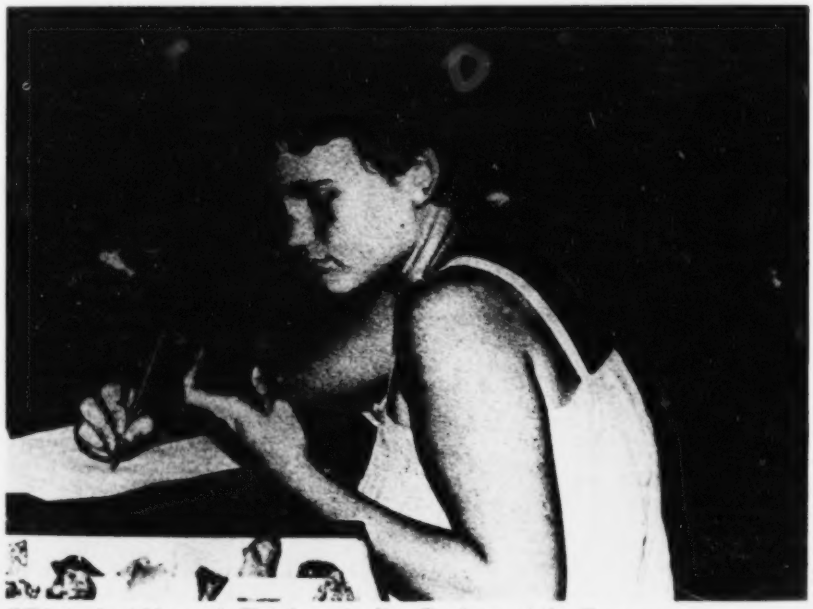
Avoid unprofessional appearances that will decrease your chances. Do not use erasable bond or onion skin; print appears fuzzy on soft paper. Do not smudge pages with erasures and strikeovers. Strive valiantly to avoid painting the whole page with correcting liquid. Avoid using typefaces that look like handwriting or *italics*. If you use a computer with a dot matrix printer, make sure the printing is easily legible. Always use a good, dark ribbon.

Hold your manuscript together with a paperclip at the upper left-hand corner, which is why your name and page number go on the right-hand corner of each page. Don't use staples or binders—editors need to be able to separate the pages of a manuscript easily.

But appearance isn't everything. When I was a screener for a fiction contest, I rejected unprofessional-looking manuscripts (yarn binding, crayon pictures, erasable bond). That's why I rejected the winner of the contest. Yes, it's true. We were looking for a book of short stories, and the winner had sent a jumble of his previously published stories snipped from magazines and dumped into a 9" x 12" envelope. The "manuscript" looked unprofessional and I was affronted, an affliction common to those who read the lower 90%. However, screeners were required to explain rejections in a short note to the editor. I wrote that, while this guy's stories were good, he had sent a jumble of previously published stories, not even paper-clipped together, without even a table of contents.

When the editor glanced at my affronted note and saw the author's name, she had the good sense to read the stories herself. And I'm glad she did. Earlier, the author had written a query letter to the editor, asking if she was interested in a retrospective collection of stories, and explaining that he was disabled and could not type.

Here's the point of my story: To get to the editor, you have to go through or around screeners. The absolutely best writing and a professional-looking



(photo: Seth Task)

CTY student Hannah Fletcher studies Geology at the Tempe, Arizona Residential program, Summer, 1984.

manuscript might get you through screeners, but might not. There's a famous story about Jerzy Kosinski's own publisher rejecting his manuscript *Steps* when resubmitted under the name of a friend—after they had published it and it had won the National Book Award.

Yes, you have to have a good manuscript, but if you can avoid the slush pile by going around screeners, your chances of publication increase substantially.

Try a Query Letter. Before mailing your manuscript, send a query letter to the editor. This is not useful for poetry, but works well for fiction and nonfiction, especially with major book and magazine publishers. Since most newspapers have their own requirements, call and ask if a query is preferred.

A query is a business letter inquiring about interest in the piece you've written. A query is short and to the point. Briefly, a query describes the content of your piece and, if relevant, your qualifications for having written the piece.

Qualifications are relevant if, for instance, you are a verbally gifted youth and you have written a story on CTY's summer residential program for verbally gifted youth. Qualifications are irrelevant if, for instance, you are a customs official and you have written a novel called *The Scarlett Letter.*

Kate Ledger, whose nonfiction piece "What Kate Ledger, Age 12, Did With Her Summer Vacation" first appeared in the *Johns Hopkins Magazine* and was reprinted in the first edition of *Academic Talent*, used a query. She wrote the editor, got a positive reply, and then wrote her piece.

Since letters are usually signed, a positive reply gives you a name. Often, an Assistant Editor replies. Address your cover letter to the name and title of whomever replies. That person will be looking for your manuscript.

If you get a negative reply, do not throw it out. You now have a name to query for your next piece.

By now you're wondering how to choose a magazine and editor to query.

Research The Market. This question isn't so tough if you analyze the piece you've written. Ask yourself two questions. What is the subject of your piece? For whom is it written?

Take Kate Ledger's piece, for example. The subject of Kate's piece is CTY's summer residential writing program. Kate's piece was originally written for people related to the CTY experience and for people related to The Johns Hopkins University. They enjoy reading about events concerning CTY and/or Johns Hopkins.

Since Kate wrote a query, you can be sure she knew her subject and audience before she wrote her piece. If you haven't sent a query and you've already written a piece, the principle of defining your subject and audience is the same. You're just defining after you write, not before.

"When I was a screener for a fiction contest, I rejected unprofessional-looking manuscripts. That's why I rejected the winner of the contest."

Your next step is to find a magazine with an audience interested in your subject. This is called "market research". You can be sure that if you don't do your market research, you decrease your chances of publication.

In 1983, Kate didn't have much market research to do. She knew there was no magazine directed to the CTY audience, as there is now with *Academic Talent*. She also knew that the magazine most clearly directed to a Johns Hopkins audience was the *Johns Hopkins Magazine*, which has the added benefit of paying money for its articles.

You won't usually be so lucky. Your market research will require at least two hours in the library. You'll spend time in two parts of the library: the Reference section and the Periodicals (or Serials) section.

In the Reference section, ask the librarian for the latest edition of the *Writer's Market*, a book published by Writer's Digest Books. *Writer's Market* lists nearly all the paying magazines and books in the country. Separate sections also discuss manuscript preparation, query letters, literary agents, and the business of writing. Often, it also lists contests.

Say you've written a science-fiction story whose main character is a teenage boy. You've decided that your audience (people who will enjoy reading it) will be both teenagers and adults who enjoy science-fiction.

In the table of contents of the *Writer's Market*, you'll find a sction labeled "Science-Fiction." This section lists science-fiction magazines, their editors, addresses, payment rates, and other particulars. Each entry is self-explanatory, but be sure to look for comments and advice about submitting stories. For instance, some magazines in "Science-Fiction" are really horror or sword-and-sorcery publications. Science-fiction won't sell there.

Jot down the names of some magazines that look interesting, and the name, title and address for submissions. This address may be different from the subscription address, so be careful to note it correctly.

(Continued on Page 6)

Once you finish that section, think about other markets. You're the first reader of your piece. Where would you expect to see a piece like it? And don't forget—you can divide and conquer. Do you want to appeal specifically to a teenage audience? Well, there's a "Teen and Young Adult" section in *Writer's Market*.

When you turn to this section, you'll find a note at its beginning that says publications in this category are for young people twelve to eighteen. You'll see a mention of the "Juvenile" section, listing publications aimed at kids two to twelve. Don't believe it. Every good researcher always checks a reference.

In the "Juvenile" section, you'll find *Young American*, a bi-weekly tabloid for students "ages 9 - 16" that takes science-fiction stories. There are others. Note them down.

Now you should have a list of about ten magazines. Take your list to the Periodicals section, get a pile of copies of one magazine and get comfortable. Skim the table of contents for the kind of piece you've written. Read possibilities quickly to see if your piece is similar to what's already been published. This happens seldom with fiction and poetry, more often with nonfiction. Read a couple of pieces more carefully to see if their audience is the same as that for your piece.

Of course, another method of efficient market research is to think about the magazines you read at home or at school. Chances are you've written something that a person like you would want to read. Where would you read something like that?

Whatever magazines you settle on, don't forget to get a name and title from the masthead to use on your query or cover letter.

Aside from *Writer's Market*, you can find magazine and book publishers in *Literary Market Place* and *International Directory of Little Magazines and Small Presses*, both in the library's Reference section.

The *International Directory*, which is published by Dustbooks, lists mostly non-paying markets for fiction, poetry, and essays. Don't underestimate "little" magazines, which often have circulations of only 1,000. They often publish the major literary authors first. James Joyce's *Ulysses*, for instance, was first published by a magazine based in Riderwood, Maryland.

Once you know the market, you have to keep up with it. Keep track of market changes—new editors, new magazines, and such—in *The Writer* and *Writer's Digest*, monthly magazines in the library's Periodical section.

Now, armed with names, titles, and addresses, you're almost ready to mail the manuscript. Go home and type the cover letter.

Use A Cover Letter. The winner of the fiction contest I was screening did not include a cover letter, which is a business letter that accompanies your manuscript. Positive replies to queries not only provide a name and title to address in a cover letter, but also allow you to say that your manuscript was requested.

If the winner of the contest had used such a cover letter, I would have passed his manuscript directly to the editor, which is standard procedure for many publishing houses. In houses where this is not standard procedure, his manuscript would still have gone into a pile reserved for more careful reading, not into the slush pile.

But if you haven't sent a query, you still need a name and title for your cover letter. Often, poets and fiction writers do not query first. Some magazines do not expect queries first. Others will not reply to them. So, to whom do you address your letter?

Unless you know the editor, a sure way to skid into the slush pile is addressing the editor. Generic greetings such as "Dear Sir or Madam" show you don't know the editor. A better way around the slush pile is to address your cover letter to the assistant editor or someone with an equivalent title, the poetry or fiction editor, for example.

This not only flatters assistant editors, who seldom get mail addressed to them, but also helps them in their job, part of which is to find new talent. That's you, and that's why they'll read your manuscript more carefully. You'll find the names and titles of magazine personnel on a magazine's masthead, the list of staff and their titles that usually appears on the page just before or after the table of contents.

The easy part of the letter's format is typing your name, address, phone number and date in the upper right hand corner. Now skip two lines, move to the left margin, and prepare to write: 1) a name, 2) a title, 3) a magazine's name, and 4) the magazine's address. If you have a reply to query, fill in that name and title and so forth. If you haven't queried, you still have a name, title, and address from your market research.

Do not assume gender in your greeting. Typing "Dear Mr. A. Turner" to the fiction editor of *Playboy* will not make Ms. Alice Turner smile. As impersonal as it is, try "Dear A. Turner", and remember this is a business letter.

Again, the body of a cover letter is brief and to the point. If I have queried, I begin, "Per your note of (date), here is the piece you

requested." If I haven't queried, I start by stating the title of my piece and summarizing its content, in one short sentence. Authors making queries should restate that information as their second sentence. If there are unusual circumstances, include them in a third sentence. "Unusual circumstances" may mean your age, especially if you are verbally gifted. This may be to your advantage.

Choose Your Advantage. In 1961, when Walker Percy published his first novel *The Moviegoer* and won a National Book Award, he was 45. On the other hand, S.E. Hinton was only 17 when she wrote *The Outsiders*. If you don't tell, the publishing world doesn't know your age, and that can be an advantage.

Some editors simply don't care how old you are. I don't think *The Atlantic Monthly*, *McCall's*, or *The Georgia Review* care. Those editors are interested in quality, subject matter, and audience. If you meet their needs, you're in, whether 18 or 81. For these editors, your age should be a pleasant surprise after they've accepted your piece.

On the other hand, *Seventeen* pays up to $500 for nonfiction articles and only accepts poetry written by teens. And *Purple Cow*, Atlanta's newsmagazine for teens is written 80% by teens; in fact, according to the *1985 Writer's Market*, "adults must have a unique slant to be considered." With those markets, you'd be foolish not to mention your age.

Don't forget the contests specifically limited to teens. *Seventeen* runs one. So do *Guideposts*, *The Humanist*, Scholastic Publishers, and Avon/Flare novels. To find out about these, check the market research sources I've mentioned above and—more important—tell the head of your English department that you are interested. Notices about nearly all these contests are mailed to nearly all schools.

So the answer to whether you should mention your age is that you have to decide whether it's to your advantage. Remember, though, that your objective is to increase your chances of publication. If you write as well as someone many years your senior, as many verbally gifted teens do, then stating your age may help. But if you write that well, why not choose a market limited to people your age? With that strategy, you should outclass nearly all the competition.

Once you've decided about stating your age, sign the cover letter and attach it with a paperclip to your manuscript. You're ready to mail.

Seal The Envelope. To mail your piece, you need two envelopes, one for sending and one for receiving. If your piece is six sheets or less, fold it in thirds and use business-size (#10) envelopes. With more than six sheets, use flat 9" x 12" envelopes.

You must ALWAYS enclose A SELF-ADDRESSED, STAMPED ENVELOPE (referred to as "SASE"). You will receive your manuscript back in the SASE if an editor decides not to publish it. Without an SASE, you may never see your manuscript again.

If you are using 9" x 12" envelopes, have the Post Office weigh the packet to determine the cost of mailing. You need stamps for both the envelope you send and for the SASE. You can save money by mailing "Special 4th Class Rate: Manuscript," but you may have graduated from college by the time it arrives. I almost always spend the extra money to send my manuscripts First Class.

These are the mechanics involved in getting published. The very last thing is waiting. Waiting is awful. The only way to avoid waiting is to get busy on your next piece. I'm always busy on my next piece. That way, if some dimwitted editor has the insensitivity to reject my last masterpiece, I'm already on the next, better one.

Ben Reynolds is Senior Writing Instructor at CTY, and the co-author of Writing Instruction for Verbally Gifted Youth: The Johns Hopkins Model *(Aspen, 1983). He also teaches fiction-writing for the Hopkins School of Continuing Education, and his latest story appears in the* Florida Review. *He received his M.A. from the Department of Writing Seminars, The Johns Hopkins University.*

EDITORIAL

Talent and Creativity Require Information

(Editor's note: The author of this issue's editorial is Dr. William G. Durden, Director of CTY and assistant professor of German at The Johns Hopkins University. Dr. Durden has directed CTY since 1982. He is the author of several scholarly papers and is a frequent lecturer on the education of academically talented youth.)

The education of the gifted and/or creative child, to be appropriate, proper, and deserving of a special area of study, should be 'qualitatively differentiated' (different or distinguished in basic nature, character or kind). The gifted child should receive an education from the earliest years that stresses the highest cognitive abilities, according to Bloom's taxonomy: synthesis, analysis, evaluation. To be dismissed are the lowest forms of thinking: defining terminology and symbols; recalling facts, names, examples, rules, and categories; recognizing trends, causes, and relationships; acquiring principles, procedures, implications, and theory. All this is mundane, destructive to creativity, superfluous and undistinguished. Away with mere information and those processes needed to master it. The gifted child should transcend information and focus as soon as possible on global issues, creativity *per se*, problem-solving, the future, infinity, dismissing any trace of

(Continued on Page 8)

constraint, routine, discipline, or tradition. No need to waste time on the fundamentals, on mere information.

Is such a plan ill-conceived? Promising too much? Perhaps; but this is not the worst. At the heart of the matter is an unflinching naivete and disrespect for the lessons drawn from the early lives of truly creative and gifted persons.

Many educators are now encouraging a wave of persons they label gifted—sometimes 10%, 20%, 30%, 40%, or 50% of the school population—and promising them great achievement to be won just by dabbling in the future, in the 'highest' cognitive realms. Ten years from now, when the achievements do not materialize for all those 'promised' youth, when they look for their achievements in the real world and find little, what then? Perhaps frustration, then anger and a vicious backlash on the very educational system that has oversold a result. And what might be missing from the young person's education that could have created this situation? Precisely that which was deliberately excised from these children's lives: the 'lowest' forms of cognitive ability, and 'mere' information.

"Creativity and talent are often strict and unexciting masters."

For the 'lowest' cognitive realms play a key role in nurturing the development of a talented/creative person. The repetitious, the mundane, the traditional, transformed into a celebrated ritual—sometimes secretly and passionately pursued—characterizes the education of countless highly creative and talented persons. Delmore Schwartz, twentieth-century American poet (1913-1966), set his agenda early, one that surely would not find a place in the contemporary American program for gifted and talented youth. 'Not creative enough' would probably be the judgement—too much mere information. This was his plan of self-education at a young age:

- Read a page of the dictionary every day
- Read a chapter in logic (Aristotle) every day
- Read a poem by Blake, Dickinson, Dante, or Milton, every day
- Read Spinoza for a half-hour every day
- Look at a work of Cezanne, Daumier, or Rembrandt
- Spend an hour writing one sentence with the goal of approximate perfection of precision
- Listen to Bach every day

(From *Delmore Schwartz: The Life of an American Poet*, by James Atlas. New York: Avon Books, 1977). No slack here. Just a rich, yet deliberate, continuous and unrelenting daily confrontation of a lively and determined mind with the fullness of an intellectual and artistic tradition that contains within itself its own past, present and future.

And memorization—that lowly beast—how does one account for its presence early in so many highly talented persons' lives, and yet its almost total absence in the directives of contemporary education? Susan Cheever, daughter of the late John Cheever (1912-1982) (who was a winner of the Pulitzer Prize, the National Book Award, the Howells Medal, two Guggenheim Fellowships; elected to National Institute of Arts and Letters, the Century Association, honorary degree from Harvard, etc.), and herself an author in her own right, recounts her childhood intellectual training: "Every Sunday after dinner, we each recited a poem for the rest of the family. It began with sonnets and short narrative verse, Shakespeare and Tennyson, but soon we were spending whole weekends in competitive feats of memory. My father memorized Dylan Thomas's "Fern Hill", my mother countered with Keat's "Ode to a Nightingale", I did "Barbara Fritchie," my father did "The Charge of the Light Brigade," and so forth. Ben [her brother], who was eight, stayed with shorter poems." (From *Home Before Dark: A Biographical Memoir of John Cheever By His Daughter*, Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1984). Memorization was firmly established as a way of life and indefatigably and vividly pursued.

And Robert Lowell (1917-1977), one of America's most gifted poets, was noted for imposing on his friends at

(photo: Joel Freid)

Dr. William Durden, Director of CTY.

St. Mark's Preparatory School a strict, almost religious regimen of reading, memorization and intellectual engagement that included a code of conduct to be resolutely obeyed. His reverence for the "fundamentals of knowledge," for information, was carefully and calculatingly wedded to his creative power early, as witnessed in a letter to his cousin, Lawrence Lowell: "I seem to be embarked on the turbid waters of poetry and scholarship. And a career of poetry and knowledge is as hard to guide as Plato's horses. On the one hand, I must range about discovering the fundamentals of knowledge, dipping into science, politics and other arcana, forever seeking an education that is both profound and practical; on the other, I must keep spiritually alive and brilliantly alive... The relevance of such schedule to poetry to obvious. I cannot think it pedantry that a man desiring to speak (or sing) something important should also desire to speak with certainty. Also, if he lacks scope, such as an acquaintance with science and an acquaintance with other languages, he will be a romantic and an anachronism." (From *Robert Lowell: A Biography*, by Ian Hamilton, New York, Random House, 1982)

The examples here are drawn from poets and fiction-writers, but their echo is to be found in figures of significant accomplishment from a wide variety of pursuits—medicine, science, the arts. And the message is unequivocal: creativity needs information. To borrow from Lowell: to attempt to cultivate a gift without respect for the certainty which can come from disciplined attention at the earliest age to the seemingly mundane and repetitious is to lead and at once condemn a future generation to pseudo-romanticism and anachronism. Creativity and talent are strict and often unexciting masters, permitting satisfaction—sometimes but fleetingly—only after respect is paid to so-called 'lower forms' of thinking.

COLLEGE WITHOUT HIGH SCHOOL: The University of Washington's Early Entrance Program

By Nancy M. Robinson, Ph.D.

The University of Washington, Seattle, is the site of an unusual program of radical acceleration that permits students of high ability and motivation to make a scholastic leap from middle school to university. Founded in 1977 by the late Professor of Psychology Halbert B. Robinson, the Early Entrance Program is now a regular part of life on the University of Washington campus. Young students, a few as young as 11, the oldest age 14 at entry, mix with students of regular college age as well as with older adults who are continuing their educations.

Many universities in this country have occasionally admitted young students for part-time or full-time studies, students so obviously ready for college that admissions officers took pity on them. A number of universities—The Johns Hopkins University, Duke University, Arizona State University, for example—have been receptive to young students for whom early entrance is appropriate; but even in a friendly atmosphere, such students have not been provided with a comprehensive support system designed especially for them. Professor Robinson set about to provide an "optimal match," in his phrase, for highly able teenagers, an environment meeting their needs both for an educational challenge and for friendship and support.

The pioneering students in the Early Entrance Program (EEP) did well scholastically, but even the brightest of them found some academic pitfalls. Few, if any, students had had sufficient writing (and rewriting) experience; the 'creative' exercises for gifted students featured in special classes they had attended previously had not taught them the craft of exposition. Before going on to calculus, most needed to be introduced to algebra and trigonometry. All of them needed help with study skills, because never in their lives had these very bright students encountered classwork they could not comprehend or remember without effort.

The Transition School was added in 1980 to respond to these problems. All students now join the EEP via an intensive preparatory program in a one-room school for fifteen students on the University of Washington campus. There, they study expository writing, history, mathematics, a foreign language, and an introduction to chemistry and physics. Most remain in this phase of the program for a school year, during which they gradually shift from special classes to a mixture of University and Transition School courses.

"Asked the inevitable question, one EEP'er said with a shrug, 'They'll just have to hold the senior prom without me.' "

What about their social lives? Although the students continue to live with their families, they nonetheless lead very active social lives. Their Transition School year tends to bind class members into close and caring groups. They share their interests,

(Continued on Page 10)

their senses of humor (they like to describe themselves as "weird", even though they aren't), and the sorts of dress, music, and activities that teenagers normally enjoy. In addition, a number of the students engage in campus extracurricular activities: non-contact sports such as crew, volleyball, bowling, golf, and swimming; writing for the daily campus newspaper; participating in clubs of their major departments, and other special interest groups. Many continue to participate in their neighborhood sports, youth symphony, and church activities. When they begin the program, most of the students' closest friends are other EEP'ers, but their circle soon widens to include students who are of ordinary college age.

The program provides a variety of support aspects in addition to the peer group of fellow EEP'ers. A counselor is available half-time both for academic and personal issues. Group meetings are required for freshman EEP'ers once a week, meetings sometimes devoted to discussing an essay the group has read, working on a joint research project, or sharing views and concerns. Planned and spontaneous social events occur frequently, and parent-student-staff affairs are held at least quarterly. Probably of most importance, the EEP lounge and kitchen facilities are a convenient meeting place for EEP'ers and their friends—sometimes providing almost too great a temptation to socialize rather than study.

How have these students fared? By all sorts of criteria, they have done well. A grant from the William H. Donner Foundation has permitted a comparison of EEP'ers with other groups of students, including National Merit Scholars and students matched for college entrance test scores, both entering at regular university age and young students who qualified for EEP but elected not to join it. The results of the comparisons show that EEP'ers have attained college grades and honors equal to those of the National Merit Scholars, and have done considerably better than other college students. In their scores on personality tests and maturity of reasoning, they compare very favorably with the other students. On the whole, their adjustment appears satisfactory, although, of course, there are some troubled youths in each of the groups. Alumni of the program are now scattered across the country in fine graduate and professional schools.

Who does well in a program of this nature? The first requirement for prospective EEP'ers is, of course, a high level of academic ability, though not all the students are 'off-scale'. A high degree of motivation for academic challenge; personal organization and commitment; a record of success in school and in other challenging activities; a firm base of family cohesion and support—all these bode well for a student's success and happiness in the program. Students who have these requirements find the Early Entrance Program to be a suitable alternative among an array of possibilities for academic acceleration.

Do they miss high school? Most of the students feel that "weights have been lifted from their shoes," that high school, for them, would have been sheer drudgery. Asked the inevitable question, one EEP'er said with a shrug, "They'll just have to hold the senior prom without me."

Unfortunately, the program is limited to students living in the Seattle area, because one of its requirements is that students live with their families for at least the first few years of their university careers. It is our feeling that family support is especially important during adolescence and the initial years of adjustment to the university, and that it remains an essential ingredient in the success of these fine young students.

Dr. Nancy M. Robinson, a psychologist, is Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at the University of Washington, Seattle. Since 1981, she has been Director of the Child Development Research Group, of which the EEP is a part. For further information on this program, write to her in care of the Child Development Research Group, University of Washington NI-25, Seattle, WA 98195.

Watered-Down School Texts Worry Parents, Educators

(Excerpted by permission from ***The Washington Post,*** 10/16/84)

By Elsa Walsh
Washington Post Staff Writer

Author Pat Zettner was thrilled when one of the nation's leading textbook publishing firms asked to include her story, "A Perfect Day for Ice Cream," in its 1985 eighth-grade reader. Then she learned that a reference to Gloria Steinem had been purged because the editor felt it represented "militant feminism." The word "pest" was gone because it showed "sibling disrespect." "Kamikaze ball," referring to a soccer game, had been purged as a "possible ethnic offense."

Those changes paled, however, alongside others by another major publisher. That company changed the title from "A Perfect Day for Ice Cream" to "A Perfect Day," and eliminated a central trip to an ice cream parlor because it seemed to advocate junk food.

"It seems almost comical at first," Zettner said recently of both books. "A textbook world in which no one must eat ice cream is an unreal world.... Its exclusion made my story—a single case among many—weaker and less vivid.... If ice cream can be censored, then what of apple pie? ...My son Steven suggested that to preserve the thought behind the changes they should have retitled it, 'A Perfect Day for Broccoli Spears.' "

Parents and educators, here and elsewhere, echo Zettner's criticism, saying that much of the prose in schoolbooks today is boring, watered-down, lacking literary merit and, at times, inaccurate.

They say the response of textbook authors to special interest groups—from nutritionists to creationists to feminists—has been so overwhelming that the America that students now read about is often not the America of their neighborhoods or schoolyards. It is an America without hamburgers or family conflict, a history without cowboys or Indians and a literature without slang or regionalism.

Locally, even young students seem to have noticed the trend. "The kids in our books seem like they have bags over their heads and they're dying of carbon dioxide...," said Matt Coburn, a fifth grader who was one of a group of student government leaders who gathered last week at Belmont Elementary in Olney [MD] to discuss textbooks in a school classroom. "They don't have real feelings.... Our books are not real life, they're boring."

Nationally, concern over the state of textbooks peaked earlier this year after Secretary of Education T.H. Bell accused publishers of "dumbing down" textbooks to match the reading levels of the bottom of the class. Since then, educational, political and publishing leaders have moved to improve American textbooks; several states are considering forming "cartels of excellence" to lobby for better books.

Publishers of the $1.1 billion annual market agree there is a problem, but blame state and local educators who set the standards for textbooks. Academically rigorous and literate textbooks exist, they argue, but schools will not buy them.

"All publishers can point to warehouses full of tough textbooks that nobody has bought," said Don Eklund, vice president of the school division of the Association of American Publishers.

One of the most common complaints about textbooks is that the reading levels are too easy. Preoccupied in the 1960s and 1970s with the problems of the disadvantaged, school systems became concerned that the average textbook was too difficult for their slower learners. Believing that it was better to have a text that everyone could read than one that many could not, educators turned to publishers for textbooks that were one or two years below grade levels.

Thus was born the reliance on controversial "readability formulas" that measure the reading difficulty of a text. To meet a formula, editors shorten words and sentences and remove unfamiliar words, often making a passage choppy and stilted. In many texts, for example in science where relationships are particularly important, simplifying frequently tends to make the text harder to follow.

An example appeared in one sixth-grade science textbook approved by the Virginia State Board of Education. "In the evening, the light fades. Photosynthesis slows down. The amount of carbon dioxide in the air space builds up again. This buildup of carbon dioxide makes the guard cells relax. The openings are closed," reads *Elementary Science 6* by Ginn and Company.

"Readability formulas have had a devastating effect on textbooks.... Often, instead of making the text easier to read, it in fact becomes less readable, more difficult," says Bonnie Armbruster, a researcher at the Center for the Study of Reading at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign who has reviewed hundreds of elementary and secondary texts.

Jim Squire, an executive consultant to Ginn, said that a couple of years ago Ginn published a fifth-grade textbook containing the inscription from the Statue of Liberty. One state adoption committee complained, arguing that the reading level of the inscription was 11th grade.

Another problem, publishers say, is the way textbooks are selected.

In 22 states, state school board members decide what books can be used in classrooms. In the other 28 states, the selection method varies; school boards in counties like Montgomery [MD] approve long lists of books from which individual teachers can choose, while Prince George's County [MD] educators typically choose one basic text for each elementary subject.

Selection committees adopt guidelines that are closely watched by special interest groups monitoring everything in texts from the treatment of animals to death and evolution. Often, the committees have hundreds of books to review but only a couple of days in which to select them.

With such time constraints, publishers say many books are given the "eight-second flip test"—a quick thumbing through. One controversial picture or subject can mean the end of consideration.

Also, schools "have a laundry list of what you must cover and if you don't cover it, you're out of the ball game," says Eklund.

(Continued on Page 12)

As a result, textbooks mention many subjects without focusing on any in depth. In one chapter on national government in a popular fifth-grade social studies book, for example, more space is devoted to the structure and decor of the White House than to the workings of the legislative branch, and more detail is provided about the Capitol building than the job of the president.

Frequently the selections and guidelines of the larger states such as California and Texas, which have some of the strictest guidelines and most active monitoring by special interest groups, reach beyond their state borders.

In the case of Pat Zettner's story, which first appeared in its original form in *Seventeen* magazine, the second publisher purged ice cream from the text because one of the company's earlier reading series had been banned in California, primarily because it included a story with a birthday party and ice cream. California's "social content" guidelines discourage the selection of textbooks that feature foods of "low nutritive value."

As a result, nearly every major textbook publisher has banned junk food, including cakes, ice cream sodas and luncheon meats. In addition, few stories in elementary readers have conflicts or fights because a number of conservative advocacy groups have objected to unhappiness or controversy in textbooks.

Belmont student Coburn said, "I once asked my Dad why there wasn't any war or adventures in our books. My Dad said he guessed that's because they don't want us to know about violence. But we read about it in our novels. In our books we see Indians making pottery, but I'd like to see the Apaches attacking a wagon train."

His comments were echoed by nearly every child who spoke. "The kids [in books] don't seem to have any feelings," said Rob Keller, another fifth grader. "If a guy is playing soccer and he's kicked in the shin and it's real bloodied and bruised in real life he would sit down and cry, but in our books he says 'oh, darn' and rides his bike home."

"No one ever dies in our books," said Belmont school president, fifth grader Heather Roosevelt.

Noted child psychologist Bruno Bettelheim, in an article "Why Children Don't Like to Read," reports that an Illinois superintendent withdrew a first-grade reader from consideration when animal lovers objected to a story in which a cat pops a balloon brought home by a group of children. Cat lovers complained the story would turn children against cats.

Sometimes the elimination of subject matter can mean the neglect of a serious subject. Many scientists believe that a biology book without a probing discussion of evolution is not worth reading, but opposition to the theory has been so intense from creationists in states such as Texas that in the past decade, according to one study, the coverage of evolution has declined by up to 50 percent in major biology texts.

In Montgomery County [MD], for example, in *Living Things* by Holt, Rinehart and Winston, evolution is not listed in the index. Instead, in a brief reference to Charles Darwin, the theory is generally described. "Many scientists believe the theory that humans developed from earlier forms of life. You may choose not to accept this theory," the text reads in introducing the subject.

"If we only had one social injustice to correct, it wouldn't be so bad," said Harriet Bernstein of the Washington-based Council of Chief State School Officers, coordinator of a national effort helping smaller states pressure publishers to write books meeting their needs. "But there are just so many...."

Even when classical literature is adapted for textbooks, colloquial language is often changed and references to the sex of characters omitted. For example, when the chapter "The Glorious Whitewasher" from Mark Twain's *Tom Sawyer* was adapted to one sixth-grade reader used in Montgomery County, most references to boys or men were changed to children or people and the slang was replaced by grammatically correct language.

Tom's oath of "honest Injun" disappeared, as did a number of the items in Tom's memorable list of payments from the boys he allowed to paint Aunt Polly's fence: part of a jews' harp, a spool cannon, six firecrackers, a kitten with only one eye and the handle of a knife.

"It shouldn't happen," said Squire of the text published by Ginn. "But often when we use dialectical and colloquial terms we find that many teachers don't want to use the texts."

Squire and other publishers also say they believe that requests by feminists have sometimes gone too far. In most textbooks, Founding Fathers have

become Founders and cowboys, cowhands. At one recent meeting of Montgomery County's high school reading textbook committee, one participant counted how many men and women had contributed to a textbook that was up for review and noted immediately that 23 men and only six women had participated.

"They'll show Lucretia Mott, but she won't be stumping, she'll be sitting.... That's subtle sexism," said the woman who was present at the Montgomery meeting to train committee members in monitoring sex discrimination.

Squire says Ginn "got in trouble with one fifth-grader reader from one state adoption committee that added up the sex of all the animals in a unit we had on dinosaurs. It turned out that most of our dinosaurs were male."

Efforts to improve texts are emerging. Twice in the last three months, publishers have met with Secretary Bell in Washington to discuss improvements. In March, education officials from 22 states met in Florida to discuss textbook quality. The Virginia State Board last year approved stiffer criteria for selecting textbooks and Florida recently passed a law requiring more training for members of selection committees.

"Kids are much more real than publishers give them credit for," said Belmont Principal Barbara Contrera. "If we shelter them from real life in school, then school becomes an unreal place."

THE WHITEWASHING OF 'TOM SAWYER'

Original passages in 'Glorious Whitewasher' chapter and adaptations in 6th grade reader, 'Flights of Color'

Original with changed words in italics	**Adaptation used in Montgomery County [Maryland]**
"Hello, old chap, you *got* to work, hey?"	"Hello, old chap, you have to work, hey?"
Tom wheeled suddenly and said: "Why, it's you, Ben! I *warn't* noticing." "Say—I'm going in *a-swimming*. I am. Don't you wish you could? But of course you'd *druther* work—wouldn't you? *Course* you would!" Tom *contemplated* the boy a bit, and said: "What do you call work?" "Why, *ain't* that work?"	Tom wheeled suddenly and said: "Why, it's you, Ben! I wasn't noticing." "Say—I'm going swimming, I am. Don't you wish you could? But of course you'd rather work—wouldn't you? Of Course you would!" Tom studied the boy a bit, and said: "What do you call work?" "Why, isn't that work?"
"No—is that so? Oh come, now—*lemme* just try. Only just a little—I'd let you, if you *was* me, Tom." "Ben, I'd like to, *honest injun*; but Aunt Polly—well, Jim wanted to do it, but she wouldn't let him; Sid wanted to do it, and she wouldn't let Sid. Now don't you see how I'm fixed? If you *was* to tackle this fence and anything *was* to happen to it—" "Oh, shucks, I'll be just as careful. Now *lemme* try. Say—I'll give you the core of my apple." "Well, here—No, Ben, now don't. I'm *afeard*—" "I'll give you all of it!"	"No—is that so? Oh come, now—let me just try. Only just a little—I'd let you, if you were me, Tom." "Ben, I'd like to, honest, but Aunt Polly—well, Jim wanted to do it, but she wouldn't let him; Sid wanted to do it, and she wouldn't let Sid. Now don't you see how I'm fixed? If you were to tackle this fence and anything were to happen to it—" "Oh, shucks, I'll be just as careful. Now let me try. Say—I'll give you the core of my apple." "Well, here—No, Ben, now don't. I'm afraid—" "I'll give you all of it!"

(photo: James Wade)

Latin brought to life: An authentic Roman senatorial toga on Latin I instructor Michael Cape.

"Wunderkind": The Artistic Prodigy

Differing approaches may contribute to our understanding of the artistically gifted.

By Gail E. J. Lipsitz

Child prodigies, especially in the arts, have always fascinated the public. The media are increasingly bringing such figures into prominence; consider, for example, the successes of the play and movie "Amadeus." "Whiz Kids," the cover story of a recent issue of ***New York*** magazine, describes two musically talented siblings and the effect of their unusual talent on their lives.[1] Fictionalists have also been attracted to write about prodigies; some have distorted or romanticized these figures, while others have contributed to our understanding of them as believable human beings. At the same time, scientists have undertaken studies to determine what forces shape extraordinary young artists, and with what results. Thus, while there are many approaches to the subject of artistic precocity, two in particular, the literary and the scientific, advance our knowledge in different ways. Not only do their distinctive perspectives inform us separately, but their juxtaposition presents a comprehensive and often consistent picture of artistic precocity.

To compare the approaches of non-scientific and scientific literature on this subject, let us begin with an example of popular journalism, Tony Schwartz's story on two extraordinarily gifted young musicians. The author spent a good deal of time over a six-month period with the subjects of his story: Dalit Warshaw, age 9, a prizewinning pianist and composer; her brother Hilan, age 7, a talented violinist and creative writer; and their parents, Ruti and Harvey Warshaw. Using factual description, anecdotes, quotations, and photographs, Schwartz brings the reader very close to this family in which the achievements of the children are no less impressive than their parents' and teachers' keen awareness of their responsibility in nurturing the children's talent.

This article suggests some fundamental questions about youths who show early artistic promise. What sacrifices must such youths make while developing their talents? How do they respond to their own successes and failures? Do they find a special happiness unknown to ordinary people?

Writers of fiction have addressed these questions, too. A significant difference between fiction and journalism is that while journalism *reports*, fiction *creates* the character and his or her world. An excellent fictional example is Carson McCullers' *"Wunderkind"* (1936), a disturbing short story portraying two musically gifted adolescents who develop in different directions. In this story McCullers drew on her own experiences and emotions as a youthful pianist who aspired to fame.

The main character, Frances, is a serious student of the piano whom her teacher declared a *"Wunderkind"* (German for "child prodigy") when she first came to him. She lives for "playing the music as it

must be played, bringing out the thing that must be in her,"[2] practicing every morning for her lessons. Although she attends high school, she has no time for other activities or socializing.

Frances has only one friend her age, Heime Israelsky, a gifted violinist. So that he can devote more time to his music, Heime is instructed by private tutors instead of going to school. When he and Frances give a concert together, the reviewers hail Heime as a "*Wunderkind*" but are less enthusiastic about Frances. As Heime continues to gain prominence, Frances' teacher points up a painful contrast with her own failure to achieve similar recognition. For months, Frances has been experiencing fatigue, restlessness, and nightmares which now intensify. During her lessons, she produces expressionless notes or, worse, sees "her fingers sinking powerless into a blur of piano keys."[3] These changes puzzle and frighten Frances. She attributes them to adolescence, remembering that "some kids played with promise—and worked and worked until, like her, the least little thing would start them crying, and worn out with trying to get the thing across—the longing thing they felt—something queer began to happen—But not she! She was like Heime. She had to be."[4] One day, after a failed lesson, Frances rushes out of the house to the world from which she has been alienated, represented by "the street that had become confused with noise and bicycles and the games of other children."[5] Here the story ends.

This story raises some troubling but important questions for artistically talented students, their teachers and parents. One wonders whether such children are sometimes too early labeled "*Wunderkinder*" by teachers who are carried away with enthusiasm and who set standards too high. What about children who do possess extraordinary talent in childhood, but later appear to 'fizzle out'? Does adolescence cause these changes, and are they permanent or temporary? What role are parents to play in their children's artistic development? It is perhaps significant that Frances' parents are hardly mentioned in McCullers' story; her teacher seems to be playing the parents' part.

Part of the richness of "*Wunderkind*" is that it gives no definitive answers to these questions; the genre of fiction allows the reader to speculate and draw his or her own conclusions. This ambiguity makes it possible to share Frances' bewilderment and to envision many possible reasons for her failure and Heime's success.

Scientific studies, on the other hand, attempt to dispel ambiguity and to uncover empirical fact. The scientist studies many individual cases in order to reach general conclusions, using methods that clearly are quite different from those of the journalist or the writer of fiction. Several studies have been done of artistically gifted children like Dalit and Hilan Warshaw.

For over two years, David Feldman studied three children who had performed in music or chess at a professional level before they were ten years old.[6] While Feldman allows that "early prodigious achievement is a developmental phenomenon,"[7] he concludes that "prodigious achievement is better conceptualized as a remarkable *coincidence*" [his emphasis] by which a specific environment, time, and body of knowledge allow an extraordinary person to express his or her potential.[8] What is unique about the prodigy is "the incredible rapidity of achievement."[9] However, Feldman maintains, even in the case of a Mozart, "early prodigious achievement is not inevitable,...nor does it occur spontaneously."[10] Thus, "even in the most extreme cases on record, intensive education over several years is required in bringing the talented child to full bloom as a master practitioner."[11] While it is not within the scope of this article to determine how representative Feldman's three cases are, the argument that environment and education play a central role in the talent development of an artistic prodigy seems reasonable.

"...while there may exist many approaches to the subject of artistic precocity...the literary and the scientific advance our knowledge in different ways."

The three children in this study, like McCullers' fictional children and Dalit and Hilan Warshaw, displayed what Feldman calls "passion" in their efforts to excel in their fields.[12] Similarly, in *Education of the Gifted and Talented*, Davis and Rimm cite several studies concluding that "one of the single most recurrent traits of productive gifted students and eminent adults is high *motivation*... sometimes labelled *persistence*...."[13] This trait characterizes both prodigies and less extremely gifted or talented students.

Another study, The Development of Talent Research Project, directed by Dr. Benjamin S. Bloom at the University of Chicago, revealed abundant evidence of this dedication in its subjects. The project studied

(Continued on Page 16)

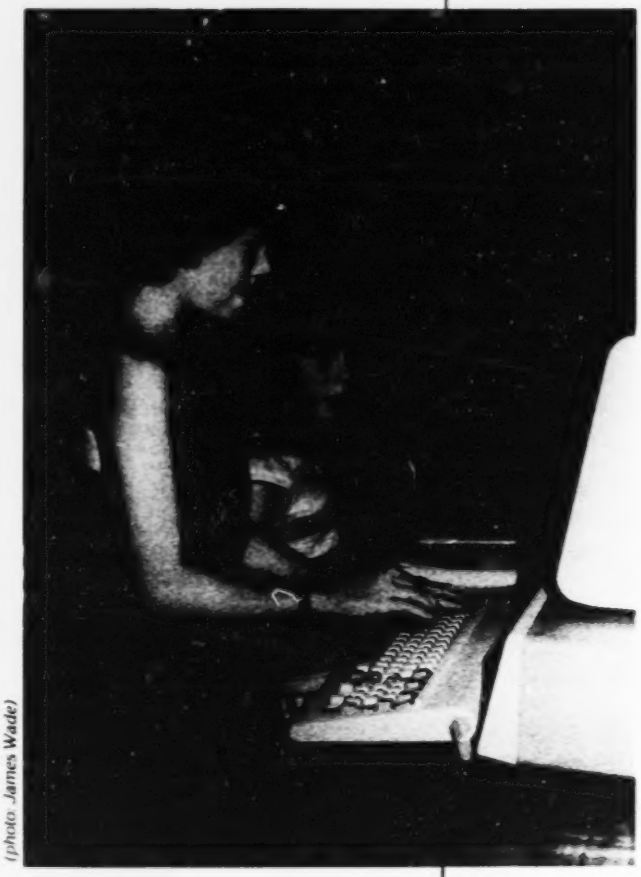
over 120 people who excelled before age 35 in one of three areas: "artistic, psychomotor, or cognitive."[14] Two groups of talented people were selected from each area: concert pianists and sculptors, Olympic swimmers and tennis players, and research mathematicians and research neurologists. The investigators wanted to identify the influences that fostered the development of these individuals.

Both McCullers' characterization of Frances and Heime and Schwartz's portrait of the Warshaws are consistent with Bloom's study. "At least from age 10 on, the talented individuals were intensely involved in their talent development, while other activities were given only a subordinate role. These children attended school and learned what the school had to teach, but rarely was this central in their lives.... During adolescence these individuals devoted 15 to 25 hours a week to lessons, practice, and other related activities in the field.... They lived and breathed their talent development. It determined their companions and the activities they would or would not engage in.... Their aspirations for their future in the talent field ruled much of their lives. They viewed themselves as members of a special group. They strived for perfection...."[15]

What made these students excel? First, Bloom found that the home played a very important role in the talent development of these children, especially in their early years. Most of them were strongly encouraged by their parents and/or other relatives, some of whom themselves had similar talents. Later, as the students became more proficient and self-directed, the families increasingly left the training to the specialized teachers, but continued to support the adolescents' talent development. This is the stage at which we meet Frances and Heime, but we are not told the extent of their parents' involvement in their earlier musical training. In his "Whiz Kids" article, Tony Schwartz concludes that Dalit and Hilan's "talents have been nurtured by the unusual environment in which they've grown up."[16] Their mother, a talented pianist, constantly surrounded them from birth with classical music and made their artistic development the priority of their lives, stating, "'I simply can't ignore their outpouring of creativity, and I believe it's important to encourage it. Maybe someday one of them will give to the world something that lasts.'"[17] Their father shares these sentiments and supports the children's growth as artists.

Furthermore, Bloom and Sosniak observed that the teacher or tutor was crucial in the talent development of the children they studied. To emphasize this point, they contrasted the learning of talented individuals under private teachers and the learning of students in traditional schools. In schools, the pattern of group learning prevails, usually with several teachers and emphasis on certain subjects or skills presented in disconnected pieces. On the other hand, in the development of a particular talent, the teaching is individualized, for the child is seen as unique. The teacher or tutor chooses the tasks, pace, and rewards suitable to the student, planning for his or her development over several years.

Bloom also explored the relationship between schooling and talent development, identifying three patterns. For some students, the two realms of their education were almost entirely distinct, and they managed to



(photo James Wade)

Two girls in the Young Students' classes are introduced to the computer.

fulfill the demands of both after some adjusting. For another group, the two spheres conflicted, for the school showed no respect for their talents, pressured them to spend more time on school activities, and made them feel like outcasts. Finally, for a third group, the school played a positive role, encouraging and recognizing the talents. Unfortunately, this most desirable relationship was the most rare.

According to Bloom and Sosniak, public performances outside the school are a means of marking the talented student's progress. The child who does well is acclaimed and profits from exposure to peers and adults who also excel in the talent field. Most students in Bloom's study perceived these events as opportunities to improve over their previous performances and identify areas they still needed to perfect.

However, "some individuals who don't succeed may give up the talent area if their failure leads to a great sense of hopelessness and inadequacy," write Bloom and Sosniak.[18] This seems to be an accurate description of what happens to Frances in McCullers' "*Wunderkind.*"

Some gifted and talented students experience difficulty in social adjustment, anxiety, and depression, according to seven studies cited by David and Rimm.[19] However, for every study finding problems among these children, another was named that concluded that "gifted and talented students are better adjusted, have better self-concepts and lead comparatively happier lives" than their less able peers.[20] Because talent development can occur at an emotional cost, both parents and teachers need to be alert and responsive to any signs of unhappiness in their children and students. Although talent development does involve sacrifices and pressures, it also affords tremendous benefits and joys.

The dialogue between science and literature suggests that, *because of* their differing approaches, these disciplines can yield different insights into the same subject. While scientific research attempts to be objective and to reach clear conclusions, fiction is subjective and leaves much to the reader's interpretation. To make its subjects more accessible, journalism may present facts and personal views. At the same time, *in spite of* these differing approaches, literature and science arrive at some similar observations. While it is important to distinguish between McCullers' fictional children and real children like the Warshaws and those in Feldman's and Bloom's studies, it is remarkable that at age nineteen, in her first published story, McCullers understood and anticipated so much of what more contemporary studies have demonstrated. More dialogue among scientists and writers can only enrich our understanding of artistically talented children.

NOTES

[1]Tony Schwartz, "Whiz Kids: The Bittersweet Blessings of Growing Up Gifted," *New York*, 17, December 17, 1984.
[2]Carson McCullers, "Wunderkind," in Susan Cahill (ed.), ***Women and Fiction*** (New York: New American Library, 1975), p.190.
[3]McCullers, p.183.
[4]McCullers, p.190.
[5]McCullers, p.194.
[6]David Feldman, "The Mysterious Case of Extreme Giftedness" in A.H. Passow (ed.), ***The Gifted and the Talented*** (Chicago: National Society for the Study of Education, 1979), p.343. Feldman also distinguishes between gifted and talented students, on the one hand, and prodigies, on the other.
[7]Feldman, p.344.
[8]Feldman, p.340.
[9]Feldman, p.345.
[10]Feldman, p.345.
[11]Feldman, p.343.
[12]Feldman, p.351.
[13]Gary Davis and Sylvia Rimm, ***Education of the Gifted and Talented*** (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1985), p.23.
[14]Benjamin S. Bloom and Lauren A. Sosniak, "Talent Development vs. Schooling," ***Educational Leadership***, 39, November, 1981, p.86.
[15]Bloom and Sosniak, p.92.
[16]Schwartz, p.36.
[17]Schwartz, p.43.
[18]Bloom and Sosniak, p.91. Note the recent publication of Benjamin S. Bloom (ed.), *Developing Talent in Young People*. Ballantine, 1985.
[19]Davis and Rimm, p.24.
[20]Davis and Rimm, p.24. It should be noted that the studies cited in Davis and Rimm do not pertain exclusively to *artistically* talented youth, yet many of their observations seem equally valid for artistic children.

Gail Lipsitz assists the Deputy Director of CTY. She has taught English for fifteen years in high schools and universities in the U.S.A. and France, specializing in literature about women.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Training Institute: The Johns Hopkins Model for Identifying and Educating Academically Talented Youth will be held on May 20-23, 1985, at the Omni International Hotel, Baltimore, Maryland. The Institute is sponsored jointly by The Johns Hopkins University School of Continuing Studies and The Center for the Advancement of Academically Talented Youth (CTY). It is designed for educators, parents, and teams of school or college personnel who wish to provide appropriate educational alternatives for academically talented students and who desire an extensive introduction to the Johns Hopkins Model. For information and registration materials, write: Training Institute, The Johns Hopkins University, School of Continuing Studies, Division of Continuing Education, 102 Macaulay Hall, Baltimore, Maryland 21218. An Advanced Training Institute will also be held, May 24-25, 1985, for those already familiar with the Hopkins Model.

The 6th World Conference on Gifted and Talented Children will be held in Hamburg, Federal Republic of Germany, August 5-9, 1985. The theme of the Conference is "Giftedness Over the Decades—A Continuing Worldwide Challenge." Formal presentations, informal discussion groups, displays and exhibits will focus on "reviewing the last decade and/or looking ahead to those which will follow." For more information, write to: Gifted Secretariat, Psychologisches Institut II, Universität Hamburg, von Melle Park 5, D-2000 Hamburg 13, Federal Republic of Germany.

(photo: Joel Freid)

Students and parents at CTY's 1984 Career Symposium.

The Career Symposium: Since its introduction in 1981, The Career Symposium has become a distinctive feature of the CTY Talent Search. It continues to expand with CTY. The Johns Hopkins University and The Maryland Academy of Sciences co-sponsor the symposium as a benefit to Talent Search participants. This year, five symposia co-sponsored by CTY, with over 2,000 students and parents attending, are planned for Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona; Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, California; The Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland; The American Museum of Natural History, New York City; and Boston's Museum of Science, Boston, Massachusetts.

Additional sites planned for 1986 include San Francisco, California and Seattle, Washington.

The Career Symposium introduces students to a wide variety of careers and allows those with interest in a

specific area to learn something of the preparations and the possibilities of related careers. A special emphasis is given to providing students and parents with accurate information about educational requirements for special careers so that opportunities are not eliminated by insufficient or inappropriate preparation. Highly successful individuals representing a wide selection of careers will share their personal experiences, including academic backgrounds, career responsibilities, and professional potential. Students are encouraged to ask questions, and parents attending with students find the day's presentations helpful in guiding their child's educational planning.

All student attendees are Talent Search participants of the 1985 Talent Search and those who were on the waiting list from 1984.

CTY Extends An Invitation To Academically Talented Girls: The Johns Hopkins University's programs on behalf of academically talented youth have had a long history of interest in exploring factors that influence and contribute to an optimal learning environment for females. In anticipation of the 1985 Summer Programs, CTY is making a special effort to encourage qualified female Talent Search participants to pursue course work in science and mathematics. In the past, CTY has found that the proportion of girls who qualify for the Science and Mathematics Program is not reflected by the proportion of girls who actually sign up for classes. Interestingly, this is not true of the Humanities Program.

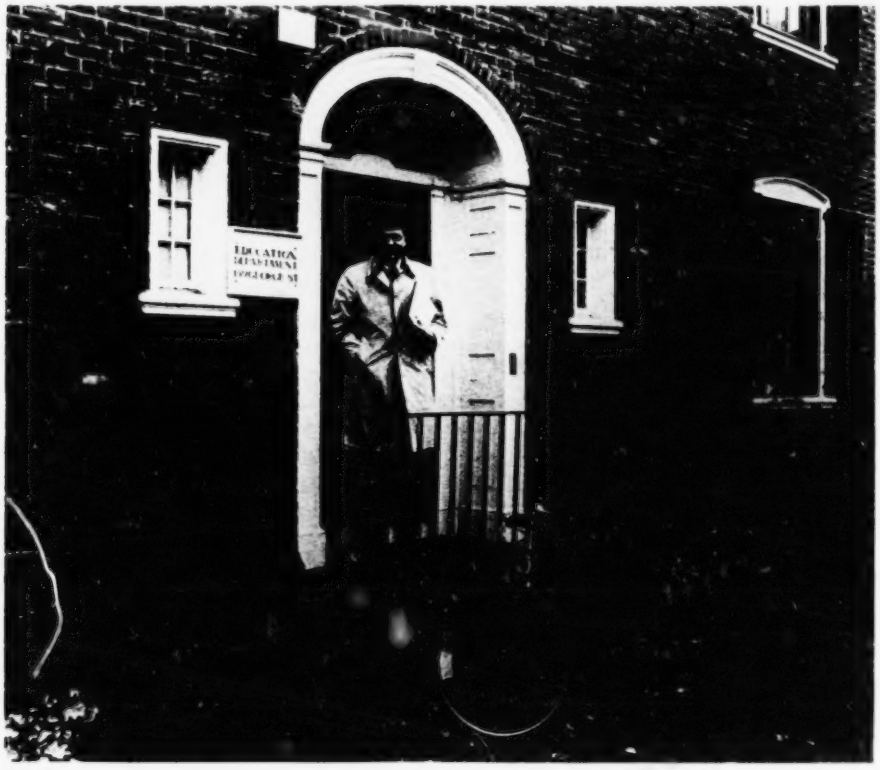
CTY is, therefore, actively encouraging qualified girls to advance their education in science and mathematics. At the CTY residential program site in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, young women will be offered the choice of two program formats for the precalculus and introductory computer science courses: the regular mixed (male/female) sections, plus an all-female group. This will provide an opportunity for qualified female students who wish to take a course in precalculus mathematics or introductory computer science to participate in an all-female class during their three-week stay. Several studies suggest that, for some girls, an all-female class can both enhance performance and increase self-confidence. (These girls will participate in the usual array of coeducational activities when not in class.)

CTY has also planned for the Lancaster, Pennsylvania, site a special optional forum for students who are interested in exploring these and related issues. A series of lectures and discussions will be offered during the evening activity hours. This series will feature guest speakers who have done research in this area, as well as professional career women who may serve as role models and who will discuss the issues related to achieving success and personal fulfillment while pursuing a non-traditional career.

The 1980's hold special promise and opportunities for academically talented girls who are willing to take risks and pursue non-traditional professional careers. Furthermore, there is no question that preparation for and advancement in almost every professional career area could be enhanced by general proficiency in science and mathematics. Boys and girls alike who are interested in the social sciences, education, and the humanities are often unaware that these fields may demand preparation in mathematics and science. To give an example, a student may wish to pursue a career in psychology. Even though it is often thought of as a 'soft' science and has traditionally been open to women, any student interested in succeeding in this field should be proficient in statistics in order to effectively conduct and evaluate research. Also valuable is a sound understanding of biology and biochemistry, so that one can understand and perhaps apply the information derived from the field of medical research to the study of human behavior. It is as important for the humanist to understand and use the tools of technology as it is for the scientist to be able to write clearly and to be knowledgeable in history, philosophy and ethics.

ACADEMIC TALENT

Vol. I, Number 3/4 The Johns Hopkins University • Center for Academically Talented Youth Summer/Fall 1985



A HIGH SCHOOL IS A HIGH SCHOOL

But Every High School Student is Different

Mass education is fine, says Educator Theodore R. Sizer, but standardized education is not. In *Horace's Compromise*, he describes the plight of the American high school teacher—trapped between too many demands from the system and too little time for the students.

It doesn't have to be that way, Sizer argues. Chairman of Brown University's Education Department and formerly headmaster of Phillips Academy, Andover, and dean of the Harvard Graduate School of Education, Sizer directs the Coalition for Essential Schools. It's essential, he says, to revamp the high school's traditional structure.

In Horace's Compromise, you say that all high schools are alike. Could you describe the typical high school? Most high schools are very large and impersonal. All start before 9 o'clock in the morning. Mom and Dad leave the kids off, that's the theory: schools start early so the parents can leave the kids and go to work. I know of none that start as late as 9 o'clock.

continued pg. 2

IN THIS ISSUE:

A HIGH SCHOOL IS A HIGH SCHOOL: An Interview with Theodore Sizer 1

THEODORE SIZER, *HORACE'S COMPROMISE. THE DILEMMA OF THE AMERICAN HIGH SCHOOL*, reviewed by William Anthony 3

COLLEGE BOARD REPORTS CHANGE FOR TALENT SEARCH STUDENTS 6

BOOKS RECEIVED FOR REVIEW 8

URSULA K. LE GUIN, *VERY FAR AWAY FROM ANYWHERE ELSE*, reviewed by Gail E.J. Lipsitz 10

INFLUENCING YOUR CHILD'S SCHOOL: A Guide for Parents, by Nancy Delano Moore 11

LEARNING TO BE WRONG, by Elizabeth Bobrick Carter 12

ATTENTION: The Media and the Academically Talented Student, by Mollie Longaker 14

MARY FARRELL CAMERER: An Appreciation 16

TO OUR READERS:

We apologize for the delay in bringing you this double issue of *Academic Talent*. We hope that you'll be pleased with our new look and easier-to-read format.

Academic Talent is for highly able students, their families, teachers, and anyone concerned with this special segment of our nation's (and the world's) youth. We welcome articles on any facet of the education of young people with outstanding academic abilities: reports of recent research, descriptions of exemplary programs, biographical studies, legislative action, book reviews. *N.B.:* There is no minimum age criterion for authors; we especially welcome contributions from students. (First-time contributors may wish to refer to "Getting Into Print: A Guide for Young Authors" in Vol. 1, Number 2 of *Academic Talent* for guidelines.)

Please let us know of your ideas for future issues, and your thoughts on previous ones. We are glad to publish letters to the editor as space permits. Thanks for your patience in awaiting the Summer/Fall issue—we hope you enjoy it!

EBC

ACADEMIC TALENT

Publisher: Sanford J. Cohn
Editor: Elizabeth Bobrick Carter
Circulation Manager: Helena Truszkowska
Editorial Assistant: Jean E. Crichton

Editorial Board at The Johns Hopkins University Center for Academically Talented Youth:
William G. Durden
Linda B. Barnett
Catherine M. G. Cohn
Sharon J. Higham
Susan M. Johnson

All break up their day into what they call "periods," usually somewhat more than 40 minutes and somewhat less than 60 minutes. Kids take at least five or six of those a day. It's all set—it's been that way since the 1890s.

Almost without exception, high schools are arranged horizontally by the age of the kids and vertically by subjects. Almost invariably those subjects are called English, mathematics, social studies and science, language arts, and so on.

High schools do vary by the social class of the students. What doesn't vary is the structure.

What are the social class differences? One way of defining social class is parental income. Another is what Ed Banfield *(The Unheavenly City: The Nature and Future of Our Urban Crisis,* 1968) calls orientation to the future. I know some very low-income kids who are very upper-class and very aggressive academically. But by and large low-income kids tend to be kids who don't put much value on investing in the future—which means doing their homework, or the ditch-digging of learning French verbs in order that sometime they might be able to speak French—in short, to do the things *that will get them somewhere.*

But there are less abstract differences. On the whole, the lower the income of students served, the larger the total load of students on the teacher. In city schools, the teacher usually faces—on the roster—five classes a day of 35 kids, which is appalling. In a suburban public high school, the teacher has five classes, or for an English teacher four classes, of 25 kids. In a very rich suburb or a very wealthy private school, the ratio may be one to 12. But if a kid's parents are low income, chances are the teacher's load is 175 kids. That's the most dramatic difference.

Another difference is that a low-income kid's chances of having textbooks for every course are lower. And that kid's chances of having *up-to-date* books for every course are lower still.

In a school with many low-income kids, many of the problems of the street wash into the school. For example, I spent some time in a school where 20 percent of the kids were already legally emancipated—they were under the age of 18, but the courts have termed them adults—and another 40 percent were *de facto* emancipated, that is they had no home addresses. Sixty percent of the kids had no home addresses. Probably very few "existed" in the census. They lived in burnt-outs. School was a health clinic, a restaurant, a sanctuary. The fights, the terrors, the drug pushing, the horror of those kids' lives were reflected in the school.

I visited the principal of that particular school in December some years ago and asked, "Has this been a good year? How's discipline?," and he said, "It's been a good year, no cutting." "What do you mean?" I said.

"There have been no razor and knife fights yet, it's all been fists."

That's not the way it is at Phillips Andover. No. The poor in this country continue to get the short end of the stick, although gross expenditures per student in many big cities are as large as those in suburban schools. Of course, much of this is soaked up in special services. Special services are needed, but they distort the data.

What's surprising, though, is that the poorer school is still organized just like every other school—even in cases, like a high school I visited last week, where half the kids couldn't read or write. Teachers teach grades made up of youngsters of a particular age. Teachers teach their own special subjects, each department operating blissfully in isolation from every other one. Seven periods a day. Every high school in New York City is the same—every last district—in its daily routine.

Those students who can't read and write still go to English and social studies and—And economics class. I talked with an economics teacher who taught the entire course without ever asking the students to read, even from the blackboard.

"What do you do?" I said.

"Well," he said, "we run a Junior Achievement program. We decide on a product to make and then sell." They turn the classroom into a factory and make the product—this year, they bought little calendars and put them in plastic folders with the school seal on them. Then the class worked out a marketing program and designed advertising posters—they did do that much writing—and then they sold the calendars in other classes."

It was a class in practical marketing, but it was called economics. The school can say it has a 12th-grade economics class, but the kids can't read. The teacher says, "They can't read, so I don't try to make them read," which is to say, "I've given up."

The conspiracy is school-wide. Everybody says, "You can't read, so we will avoid the issue."

Until they learn to read and do elementary mathematics, there's no point in giving students high school-level work. They can't read—and, God, there's nothing else the kids can do, because without that, they're slaves in society.

To say, "We're going to teach our students economics, health education, Bio I," or to play the silly game that everybody, even the illiterate in their home language, will start to learn French—the city of Baltimore now has a requirement that everybody learns a foreign language, whatever their proficiency is in English—sounds terrific. But it's silly.

We have a horrendous problem here, a fundamentally complicated problem.

If the structure is so irrelevant, what keeps it in place? High school is a rite of passage. Rituals are important, and rituals are embedded in the structure. If high schools didn't have age-grading, who'd go to the junior prom?

Graduation *must* be related to age, because graduation in many communities is a signal that it's all right to get married. It has nothing to do with whether a person knows English, it has to do with whether a person is old enough to get married. We don't tamper with these things because they're important to the culture for reasons that have nothing to do with educating students.

Have the high schools ever worked? High schools have always worked for certain groups of kids, the students whose particular incentives seem to fit with what the schools want to do. Kids who have pressure from outside the school to do well what the school wants done well. Kids who don't have to worry about protecting their flanks all the time.

As a very wise principal told me in a conversation, "Look, I will show you an effective high school—if you give me just one power."

I said, "What's that power?"

He said, "Let me pick the parents."

He was absolutely right. Let me pick the parents—I'll teach in a barn and the school will succeed.

continued pg. 6

THEODORE R. SIZER, *HORACE'S COMPROMISE. THE DILEMMA OF THE AMERICAN HIGH SCHOOL.*

Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1984. 241 pages. $16.95

"I have a secretary working for me now who can't spell worth beans. I guess you could say she was sort of 'exposed' to high school..." ***(from a conversation, June 1985)***

Emerging among a swelling genre of breathlessly urgent educational reportage, doom-saying white papers and journalistic musings on the general state (read "decay") of American education, Theodore Sizer's latest work stands clearly alone, a unique and seminal contribution. The product of several years of research, this is the first published report in a series co-sponsored by the National Association of Secondary School Principals and the National Association of Independent Schools, "A Study of High Schools."

Horace's Compromise differs not only in its refreshing style, devoid of pedagogical mumbo-jumbo, but its bracing honesty and abundant bare-boned observations. When Mr. Sizer talks tough here, as he often does, it is with a language as lean as a knife point. But most importantly, his book achieves insights afforded by few such studies through his employment of the multiple perspectives that bear on the dilemmas, those of teachers, students and administrators. The truth is indeed many-sided.

One might conjecture that Mr. Sizer's experience as teacher, Headmaster at Phillips Academy, Dean of the Graduate School at Harvard University, and most recently his Chairmanship of the Education Department at Brown University all suggest the very "layering" of the present study. Nevertheless, what the author fashions, using "composites" drawn from his diverse school observations, is a disarmingly realistic (one might even say holographic)

continued pg. 4

Horace's Compromise—continued from pg. 3
picture of secondary education. As the focus shifts from one perspective to the next—from the students to the program, to the teachers, to part four, the structure—the author studs his review with often painfully accurate vignettes of daily life in the high school. The net effect is that the reader, as a kind of voyeur, comes as close to understanding the composite individuals and their viewpoints as any text will permit. Here, the reader cannot disengage, as from statistical data and diatribes. One is instead alternately sensitized to and angered by the complacency of each player (if one may refer to the program and structure as such). While Mr. Sizer's voice may function as does the Greek chorus, the lingering question here is the identity of the tragic hero.

But what exactly is Horace's "compromise"? It is in the Prologue that we are introduced to this *leitmotif*. Center stage: "Horace Smith", composite character, veteran teacher, 53 years old, "proud, respected and committed." Horace trudges slowly through the changing scenes of a busied school day; we are shown its awful predictability (for all involved), its moments of nobility of purpose, and the deadening surrealism of a life seemingly "measured out in coffee spoons." Mr. Sizer observes, with a keen eye for indices of vitality or mere stasis, all of the exigencies straining for Horace's attention. Despite the best of intentions, for Horace is not a bad teacher, it is too much:

> Most jobs in the real world have a gap between what would be nice and what is possible. One adjusts. The tragedy for many high school teachers is that the gap is a chasm, not crossed by reasonable and judicious adjustments. Even after adroit accommodations and devastating compromises—only *five minutes per week* of attention on the written work of each student and an average of ten minutes of planning for each fifty-odd-minute class—the task is already crushing, in reality a sixty-hour work week. For this, Horace is paid a wage enjoyed by age-mates in semiskilled and low-pressure blue-collar jobs and by novices, twenty-five years his junior, in some other white-collar professions.

What begins on this individual level becomes a quiet conspiracy of compromises by the conclusion.

With a high school diploma, the starting salary for all new United States postal workers is $19,136. Possessing a bachelor's degree, a starting Baltimore city high school teacher would earn $15,643. With a master's degree, the salary would climb to $16,730. The starting city garbage man would earn $13,000. A starting hospital orderly $11,440. The teacher would not, however, earn overtime.

Horace's students are somewhat more individuated, although still "composites." Teachers reading this will nod in recognition; parents will find unique access to the other third of their offsprings' lives. "How was school?" "Fine." Well, here is that student and here is that school. Mr. Sizer begins with a question too. "Why do you go to school?", he queries one of his student guides. Those at the bottom of education's neat pyramid, the teacher and student, are the active ingredients. Mr. Sizer repeatedly points out that the educational philosophies, the self-proclaimed goals, the lesson plans and curriculum guides do not reveal but sometimes conceal the truth. Students, he knows, do not. And their answer to Mr. Sizer's question, if disappointing, is suitably vague.

The students we meet comprise a swarming adolescent population that is diverse in race, class, motivation and talent. At the same time, one is gently reminded by Mr. Sizer of the perils facing all adolescents, the unfamiliar ground of early adulthood: sex, drugs, stress, alcohol, coupled with (in Sizer's view) an additional shared experience—a generally stultifying school life which holds few incentives for active engagement. The student's implicit compromise is his acceptance of the protective comfort afforded most students in return for passive acquiescence. Seat-warming. Docility.

The author's song of the school, a hurdy-gurdy of details, minute and momentous, is in fact a lament. It is the student whose potential for growth is sacrificed to the ritualization of schooling. It is the student who is robbed by a system that molly-coddles him, by teachers who are too nice. "We teachers are too nice: we test the kids, and take the blame if they fail." Lulled into a complacency, in many schools, that derives from too few demands, Mr. Sizer concludes: "Most adolescents know they can do more." Indeed, when the authorial voice emerges from the studied descriptions, it rings with the potency of a great liberator:

> High schools must respect adolescents more and patronize them less. The best respect is high expectations for them.... We should expect them to learn more while being taught less.

While his is a most compassionate and sensitive view of today's adolescent, Mr. Sizer's prescription is as rigorous in its demands as it is simple. Set clear goals geared to the student's level; offer sensible guidance; and finally, place the burden of learning on the students. If a student has no desire to remain in high school or poses disciplinary problems, he could, having once proven mastery of basic mathematics, English and civics, leave high school. At his most iconoclastic (and refreshing), Mr. Sizer views high school as a holding tank for too many students, a convenient system for keeping them out of the job market and preserving adults' positions.

The secret, they learn, is a rigorous program that energizes students, who then inspire their teachers and each other: synergy. (From an article on the Bronx High School of Science in Smithsonian, *May, 1985.)*

"What I'm trying to do is teach them to be their own teachers.... Most of them—and I tell them this quite often—will make their greatest progress when they leave me." (Leon Fleisher, of the Peabody Institute, in The Johns Hopkins Magazine, *June, 1985)*

In part two, "The Program" (goals, curriculum, skills and methodology), Mr. Sizer laments the numbing sameness of American high schools, despite regional differences. Like the students earlier, the educators themselves cannot define the rhet-

oric of their own goals. Whether we educate successfully the mind or the character is moot: neither appears to occur. Saying is not doing.

Central to Mr. Sizer's own philosophy is the adage, "Less is more." The high school curriculum is a "cauldron of polemics." Information is plentiful; learning to use it through direct experience is difficult. "Personal coaching", not purveying information, is the rightful role of the teacher. Yet whether Horace wants to or not, it is almost impossible for him to coach; the teacher thus becomes an unwitting roadblock to real learning, as defined here. Or, more perversely: "Telling is cost effective, far more so than coaching." In the same vein, questioning, the Socratic method of engaging students in purposeful dialogue, more difficult than coaching or telling, requires classes smaller than twenty. As for the subject matter, it must lead to new levels; it must be "generative", not merely information as an end alone.

A range of issues is treated at the close of this segment, among them computers, prayer, foreign languages and values. But the keystone for Mr. Sizer is always the critical relationship of student—teacher—subject matter: "If we want our well-intentioned plans to succeed, we'll have to *inspire* the adolescents to join in them—inspire even the sullen, uninterested kids..."

Part three: the teachers. Critical variable in a fragile ecosystem. Catalyst or clog? Once again, Mr. Sizer reduces the situation to its elemental core: "The key worker in a school is the student. The only important product is his or her learning." The business of teaching, that which is to spark the student's learning, Mr. Sizer paradoxically remystifies. He terms it: "craft", "delicate", "difficult", "a form of theater", and an "extraordinarily complex and subtle business." The point, of course, is to elevate the common view of the profession.

In 1852, at the annual New York State Teachers' Association Convention, the debate focused on the question, "Why is the profession of teacher not as highly respected as that of lawyer, doctor, or minister?"

After some turmoil, the young Susan B. Anthony spoke: "It seems to me that you fail to comprehend the cause of the disrespect of which you complain. Do you not see that as long as society says the woman has not brains enough to be a lawyer, doctor, or minister, but has plenty to be a teacher, every one of you who condescends to teach tacitly admits before all Israel and the sun that he has no more brains than a woman?"

In a curious way, the reader himself is taught here by experience, not merely through convincing rhetoric. One endures, briefly but painfully, dead lectures, dull administrators, and classes riddled by mindless public address messages. What Mr. Sizer terms "The Conspiracy of the Least" appears to be a contract agreed upon by all. One assumes he means here parents and school boards or trustees as well. The stasis is quiet, reassuring. The reader wonders why the peasants in this hierarchy, students or teachers, do not revolt.

Nevertheless, there is little in the way of an accusatory tone here. Evidently Mr. Sizer is more interested in getting down to the business of education. Among the solutions: reduce the number of students each teacher is responsible for by one half (80 maximum); hire more teachers; "coaching" for new teachers and students; more latitude at each level of the educational pyramid, commensurate with success; agreement by teachers *and* students on the subject matter; give students a sense of "ownership" in their education; and finally, teach for mastery. There are no stones unturned here and certainly no sacred cows. To be sure, there are few concepts here that most persons involved in secondary education have not already heard, but they are brought to light with a laser-like focus. They bear retelling, one supposes, until the lumbering beast of education is rerouted. If you are not a teacher, you will know what it means to be one. The same is no doubt true for the other "players."

Finally, there is the structural component of the dilemma: the bureaucracy. Whether this comprises the leading edge or the hind end of our educational behemoth is open to speculation. Fortunately, as Mr. Sizer notes, many teachers can (indeed must) close an ear to its pronouncements in order to conduct their proper business. If there is a villain for Mr. Sizer, this is it: "When one considers the energy, the commitment, and quality of so many people working in the schools, one must place the blame elsewhere. The people are better than the structure. Therefore the structure must be at fault." At a recent workshop conducted by this writer, a high school teacher pointed out that he had no choice but to plan five years in advance in order to introduce an honors course. No business of any size, if that is the proper metaphor, can successfully operate in this manner. But the problem is that those who know the most about the "productivity" of this "mechanism", the teachers and students, are, at least officially, voiceless in tuning their environment for maximum efficiency.

Mr. Sizer's educational imperatives are:

1. Give room to teachers and students to work and learn in their own, appropriate ways.
2. Insist that students clearly exhibit mastery of their school work.
3. Get the incentives right, for students and for teachers.
4. Focus the students' work on the use of their minds.
5. Keep the structure simple and thus flexible.

Then, as he puts it, "get out of their way."

Already there are signals that Mr. Sizer's ideas are generating rethinking, if not actual reform. Several Baltimore area public high schools, including possibly some private secondary institutions, will join Mr. Sizer's nationwide "Coalition of Essential Schools." While at the very least he will have spawned educational discussions at more profound levels, the talk must perforce be followed by substantive responses. *Horace's Compromise* and its articulate challenge to educational reform was not made for the coffee table.

Reviewed by WILLIAM ANTHONY, St. Paul's School, Brooklandville, Maryland

5

COLLEGE BOARD REPORTS CHANGE FOR TALENT SEARCH STUDENTS

The College Board has recently announced changes in its Admissions Testing Program (ATP) that will affect seventh and eighth grade students participating in talent search programs in the fall of 1985.

The Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), taken by talent search participants, will remain unchanged. Changes will take place in publications, the Student Descriptive Questionnaire (SDQ), score reports, and Summary Reporting Service.

Maureen Welsh, SHCJ, Associate Director of the College Board's Admissions Testing Program, describes the major changes affecting talent search participants as follows:

1. Content, design, and titles of publications reflect enhancements to the ATP. The *Registration Bulletin* (formerly *Student Bulletin)* has been reorganized to facilitate use. *Using Your College Planning Report* (formerly *Your Score Report)* deals with decisions to repeat the SAT and the significance of scores.

2. The new four-page Registration Form together with the revised Student Descriptive Questionnaire (SDQ), though larger and more comprehensive, is easier to complete and requires no more time than the older form.

3. Score reports are larger (two 8½" x 11" pages) to accommodate expanded information from the new SDQ. Information about scoring, score interpretation, and percentiles appears on the reverse of score reports.

A High School is a High School—continued from pg. 3

Neither students nor schools get to pick their parents. There was a time when more of the students who actually went to high school were likely to respond to the system's incentives. As recently as 1950 only half the age group finished high school. Today, the percentage of diploma recipients is somewhere between 70 and 75 percent. Enrollment is somewhere over 90 percent—the percentage will never reach 100.

The second world war was fought by an army whose average school completion level was the eighth grade. The Vietnam war was fought by an army with a high school diploma. Between those two wars, there's been a social revolution: mass high school education for the first time.

Today, the majority of American schools are very nice schools. They aren't ill disciplined. They aren't dangerous. They're full of happy, friendly kids. A lot of them have great fun striking their bargains, going through in mindless, happy fashion.

But for many of these students, many of whom wouldn't even have been in high school in 1947, the incentives are all wrong. If what a student wants is a high school diploma, and if the student has no particular ambitions for some sort of technical, specialized career, and if the student knows that the way you get a diploma is collecting Carnegie units, which means serving time, then the student is likely to say, "Well, I'll serve time doing as little as possible." Which means not being truant more than X days, not cutting-up too much. "Do the minimum, and I get as many Carnegie units as the person who breaks his back. Why do more? We'll both wind up with the same diploma."

Current incentives value expenditure of time. Some states call it *seat time*, a wonderful phrase, and in the name of excellence, they measure it in minutes per year: If a school has 36,000 minutes of academic seat time in California, the school gets a bonus. So kids say, "I'll play the game, turn on the clock."

If we said, "You get a diploma if you show us you can *do* some important things," then we would get a different result. Get the incentives right, and you can teach anybody anything.

So turning high school into a mass enterprise is part of the problem? The problem isn't mass education. The problem is the assumption that standardized practice is the route to high standards—we're all different.

A lot of people these days just don't understand that. They think that by centralized regulations and standardized practices, high school will improve.

Oh, high school will improve a little bit, because it will go from mindless to marginally less mindless. If you have everybody take aspirin, you are going to cure a few headaches.

Competency testing by the state, to make sure everyone has learned the same things, is the lesser of two evils. The greater of two evils is the state that says to the school, "There will be one syllabus and we will decide it and you will administer it to the students so-and-so many minutes per day." That is, everybody will use the same, specific program, all in the name of excellence.

And in the name of equity as well? It's fair because everyone is getting the same thing? That's right. Everybody will have their left finger amputated because a few may have a left finger that needs to be amputated.

And economy too— It's very simple. You set up an assembly line and have an ax going, bang, bang, bang. You can whack a whole lot of fingers. It's silly, absurd.

But the alternative means trusting the teachers. Some of them don't deserve the trust, some of them do. But unless we trust the teachers, we won't get more teachers we can trust. It's a vicious circle.

If we make the job attractive, make it a job which has some authority, then more people who are deserving of that authority will enter the profession. If we reduce the autonomy of the position, we'll drive out the best people. There it is.

Running down teachers is a popular thing to do at cocktail parties. Have teachers gotten a bad press? Yes, I think the current teaching force is stronger, as a whole, than it has ever been. But the job, as it's structured in many high schools, is impossible. Many very good teachers do journeyman's work, many journeyman teachers do terrible work, simply because there's no alternative.

If we get the conditions right—better, not right—we'll find that a lot of teachers will do a lot better and be a lot happier.

One condition, you've already suggested, would be fewer students. What are some others? More authority for the teachers. Control over their own time and materials. And authority to handle kids directly, instead of always having to refer to this or that, or send them somewhere else.

It saps a teacher's morale when somebody else is making all the important decisions about students whom that teacher knows better. That's why in private schools, many of which give much more authority to the teachers, morale is often quite a bit higher than in the public sector, even though salaries may be lower. Those teachers have some control.

Teachers, of course, must be prepared to make compromises. If the goal is to reduce the number of students per teacher, the compromise might be to teach more subjects to fewer students. If, for example, I'm prepared to teach both English and social studies, instead of teaching social studies alone to 160, I can teach English and social studies to 80. This will cut in half the number of kids I have to get to know. The compromise is that I have to teach a subject in which I didn't happen to major in college. To me, that's a much readier compromise.

But such a compromise involves a change in certification laws. And, for the teacher, that kind of compromise means taking risks, working hard, and working in a team.

Are you saying it is a compromise for teachers to have to work in a team? For some teachers it is, because it means admitting to your colleagues, "Gee, I just don't know English very well, you've got to help me." Some teachers don't want to collaborate with each other.

On the other hand, teachers are already forced to teach outside their specialties. Whenever a school board cuts the number of teachers, then the teachers with the most years are told, "You can stay, but you have to teach an unfamiliar grade, an unfamiliar subject"— But within their certification. Of course, that certificate could be 20 years old. It may be a "general" certificate.

I talked with the headmaster in a very distinguished Boston public school where a kindergarten teacher was being asked the following year to teach 12th-grade physics, because her certificate was a general certificate. She had the right seniority, the right race. We joked about this, and said, "It'll never happen, it'll never happen." A year later, it had happened. She retired early. She was an excellent kindergarten teacher, but some computer bounced her into physics. Stupid.

continued pg. 8

College Board—continued

4. On both the College Planning Report (student report) and the College Admissions and Advising Report (the report that will be sent to talent search programs) scores are reported as score ranges as well as single numerical scores. Score bands represent one Standard Error of Measurement above and below the reported score. Score ranges on the new reports illustrate that the SAT is not a precise measure of ability but an approximation of a range of verbal and mathematical skills.

5. In 1985-86 two copies of score reports will be provided automatically to each seventh and eighth grade student, one for personal use and one for use by his/her middle or junior high school. Code 1000, previously used by these students to obtain copies of score reports for school use, has been eliminated.

Contacted at the New York office of the College Board, Ms. Welsh elaborated on the reasons for the changes. "The impetus for change came from students and colleges," she said. Stating that the College Board has always attempted to respond to the needs of those who use their services, she adds that "technology can now do things that were desirable but not possible before."

Ms. Welsh asked *Academic Talent* to stress that "the College Board ATP—the testing—is not new. Only the registration and reporting procedures for ATP are new." Further information may be obtained from *The College Board News*, or from The College Board, 888 Seventh Avenue, New York, NY, 10106.

BOOKS RECEIVED FOR REVIEW

Education of the Gifted and Talented, by Gary A. Davis and Sylvia B. Rimm. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1985.

When a College Works with a Public School: A Case Study in School-College Collaboration, by Sidney Trubowitz. Boston: Institute for Responsive Education, 1984.

Developing Talent in Young People, Dr. Benjamin S. Bloom, Ed. New York: Ballantine Books, 1985.

Spread Spectrum Communications, Volume I, by Marvin K. Simon et al., 1985.

Fourth Annual Microcomputers in Education Conference: Literacy Plus, edited by Ruth Camuse, 1984.

Programming Languages: A Grand Tour, Second Edition, edited by Ellis Horowitz, 1984.
(all from Computer Science Press, Inc., Rockville, Maryland)

The Dictionary of Misinformation, by Tom Burnam. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Publishers, 1975.

A High School is a High School—continued from pg. 7

Everyone of us has one of those horror stories about the teacher who doesn't know the subject he or she is teaching. A lot of teachers don't know their subjects, but many do.

The real problem is that there is no incentive for those who don't know their subjects to learn more about them. And another thing—no one ever sees these incompetent teachers at work. There's no one to watch them. If they say something wrong, no one knows. And, often it's not even that the teacher is incompetent, it's that he just doesn't know.

When schools start teaching in teams, someone else will be watching. I sat with a school principal in a social studies classroom where the teacher said that the reason the Chinese came to the West Coast in the 19th century was because it was cheaper to bring them here than to send the dirty laundry to China. And that wasn't a joke. I almost fell out of my chair and so did the principal, but if he hadn't had a visitor to show around, he never would have heard.

Your Coalition for Essential Schools will try some of these ideas? What we're going to try to do is join together a small group of schools, 15 to 25 of them, all of which agree to a very simple set of basic principles and which try to put these principles into practice. We'll spend five to ten years working with them and see what we can learn.

The principles? No one will get a diploma except on the basis of mastery. No teacher will ever have more than 80 kids. The basic pedagogy will be what we call coaching. The kids will be expected to do the work, while the teachers support them. The expenditure per pupil will not increase by more than 10 percent. Among the compromises such a school will be prepared to make is that it will not be a comprehensive service center.

No two schools will put those principles in effect in precisely the same way. Nor should they.

There are a lot of schools out there that say they'd like to try. What the Coalition staff is doing now is visiting schools who've expressed interest. We're meeting good people, who want to do right by the kids. That's a cause for optimism.

But 15 to 25 high schools, out of thousands in the U.S., are a drop in the bucket. Salk didn't give his vaccine to everybody in the beginning. It's an experiment—an experiment in the schools.

The 15 to 25 schools will be enormously diverse. There's a great distance between many of the schools we are visiting, even when they are as geographically close as an inner-city high school in Baltimore and a suburban high school in Columbia, Maryland.

What's been interesting is that a disproportionate number of the schools serving the poor have expressed interest. Why? They say they don't have much to lose.

Some people have criticized your plan. They usually cast their criticism this way: "You're talking about giving an 'intellectual' education to kids who will become ditch-hole diggers. *They* don't want a liberal education." By "they," the critics mean the poor and the minorities. "*They* should be trained up to be service workers." I find that argument easy to knock down.

What's your rebuttal? "Thomas Jefferson would be surprised to hear you say that." Just because you're black and poor doesn't mean you're dumb. Just because you're rich and white doesn't mean you're smart.

But people really say things like: "Just send *them* to vocational school."

Learning to think is vocational training, whatever you do. Yes. And, of course, a student can learn to think in what appears to be vocational, as well as academic, training. Remember, no two schools will put our principles into action in the same way.

One of the teachers I describe in my book was a person I called Charles Gross. He was an electricity teacher. The day I was there, he had his students up at the boards doing their circuitry. Most of those kids wouldn't be in school if they weren't doing hands-on work in electricity, which they saw as a trade that they were likely to use afterwards.

But Charles Gross wasn't primarily teaching them the techniques of electricity, because he said the technology of the trade changes every five years and anything

taught in school would be quickly obsolete. As the students worked at the board, he would walk behind one and say, "Billy, what would happen if you switched that differently?"

And Billy would point—always. Mr. Gross would say, "Billy, I'm blind, you've got to tell me." So—to put it pompously—Billy would engage in the careful description of hypothetical deductive reasoning. If he did this, then that would happen. But on the other hand, that would lead to this further result. A very complicated, abstract train of consequences. And the youngster would have to say all this in precise language—he wouldn't have to write it, but he would have to say it.

A vocational teacher has only 50 students. Charles Gross knew those kids, one by one. His teaching was very sophisticated, basic, basic, basic training—not just "vocational" training in electricity. It wasn't taught by *Dick and Jane*. It was taught in a way that held the attention of those particular kids. And it was effective.

There are a lot of people saying, "Go back to the basics. There's only one pedagogy, that's grinding it down. Warriner's grammar for all." But unless we get the kids' attention, unless the incentives are right for those *particular* kids, we won't persuade them to learn.

We have to teach in different ways with different kids, particularly the demoralized. We can't just say, "You should be interested in the life of the mind, therefore you will now read *Ivanhoe*." We need to come at it from different angles, different directions.

We can never stop trying—that would be a waste of intellectual resources, the minds of young people. There's no way of knowing which kids will need what skills. Imagination, resourcefulness, and high intelligence are not the preserve only of the wealthy. A lot of poor kids, maybe now semi-illiterate, are in fact very, very talented. Unless we make it possible for every young person to have a shot at showing off, at achieving, we won't know who can.

Sure, a lot of kids are going to live very dull lives, at least by our values. We hope they're happy lives, but they're going to be dull. The question is, how do we collectively—how does society—decide which lives we'll each live? The answer is, we must eliminate to the greatest possible extent influences on each of our decisions that are unfair. We should push every kid as though that youngster were going to reach the moon.

And we should do so knowing full well that some kids will say, "I need to add and multiply and subtract and divide but beyond that, everything's dull. I'm *never* going to use any more math." For a lot of people, that's true. They won't even use percents—alas, they'll be conned by the bank. But for others, more advanced work will be essential. And no one knows which will be which.

Society categorizes all the time. If a person is black or Hispanic and poor, that person is a service worker. It's a self-fulfilling prophecy. And some of the kids start believing it. I remember working with a girl from Baltimore who came to an intensive program at Andover Short Term Institute saying that she was going to be a practical nurse. She left saying she was going to be a physician. The last I heard, she was a full scholarship student at Goucher College. Six weeks with a science teacher completely redirected her sense of herself. She was miserably schooled, but look where she is now because that physics teacher saw something special in her.

All this will be a very hard job because many young people don't see much in the system that rewards them or their families. Why play the game if the rules are stacked against you? And what do we tell a low-income black kid these days, "Shoot for the stars"? The kid will say, "Who are you kidding?"

Is that the key thing, though, not categorizing students? There are no panaceas. But if there is one idea that seems to be very persuasive, it is the elimination of anonymity.

Truancy in good elementary schools is very low. One obvious reason is that the students are little kids, but another reason is that these youngsters are known as *individual* people. There aren't big classes, so when Johnny is absent, Mrs. Jones knows who Johnny is, knows where Johnny lives, knows Johnny's younger sister, goes and finds Johnny's younger sister: "Where's Johnny?"

And if Mrs. Jones is really aggressive, she trots down to the local game emporium, grabs Johnny by the ear, and drags him back. In the high school, with 125 kids or 150

continued pg. 10

VERY FAR AWAY FROM ANYWHERE ELSE, by Ursula K. LeGuin

Bantam Books, 1976

Suppose you are a high school senior who considers himself an intellectual, wants to go to MIT, and has stopped trying to conform with the crowd. What do you do if your father wants you to be a "normal car-loving American teenager" and your mother wants you to go to nearby State University and to be nothing more than "alive," "normal," and "happy"? This dilemma confronts Owen Griffiths, the narrator of Ursula K. LeGuin's novel *Very Far Away from Anywhere Else.*

In reviewing his youth, Owen analyzes attitudes toward bright, precocious children, pressures on teenagers to conform, and the psychological effects of these attitudes and pressures. Realizing that "some kids really don't have much Me at all," Owen embraces his own individuality. While describing himself with wry humor, he nevertheless suffers from isolation and an intensifying sense of being lost in a suffocating fog. In particular, he wonders "why it is that people make heroes out of people who are good at sports or politics, but have this scorn and resentment against people who are good at thinking."

Fortunately, Owen meets Natalie Field, a talented musician and composer in his class at school. Natalie is the first person to understand Owen since the one teacher who accepted and encouraged his intellectual abilities was reassigned to another school. With Natalie, Owen gains the confidence to be himself and learns that "you could have a very immodest ambition if you went after it methodically." In turn, he helps Natalie relax and laugh, offering her outlets she needs in her serious, single-minded devotion to music. Natalie shares with Owen her interest in the Brontë children (Charlotte, Branwell, Emily, and Anne) who created imaginary countries, just as Owen had created the island of "Thorn" at the age of twelve.

continued pg. 11

A High School is a High School—continued from pg. 9

kids or 120 kids to be responsible for, the teacher doesn't know many individuals. Their sisters? C'mon. Where they live? Too much.

Many high school students are anonymous in their schools. They can drift. And they feel that no one cares. If we can change the high schools to get the anonymity down, then we will have a fighting chance. This is what many of us who want to reform the schools are saying.

The trick, then, is how to get those ratios down without increasing budgets. The trick is for people to be prepared to make the necessary compromises to eliminate anonymity. It can be done.

But when you're dealing with a demoralized student who has been around schools for nine years and hasn't picked up the skill of reading, how do you teach that person? Slowly, patiently, and with great difficulty. We're dealing with a very wounded person.

The humiliation of not being able to read is why a lot of kids fake it. They're very clever at faking it. They'll look at the picture and guess. And you and I would be the same way. When we go to a foreign country and forget the language, we fake all over the place.

This makes teaching exceedingly difficult. One-on-one usually works best, or one-on-two. Often, the only people who can get through are peers, a sixteen-year-old teaching another sixteen-year-old.

We know a lot about how to do it. It's just that it's very expensive. It takes a lot of "people time". And that "people time" is spent as much in dealing with the damage to self esteem and with the demoralization as in getting the student to read.

It's not as expensive as dealing with them the rest of their lives. Have you got numbers on that? Various people have computed such costs. But that argument involves long-range thinking. It's like lowering the national debt: people say, "We just won't talk about it now." The same reasoning is applied to education: "We'll cut the funds and not talk about the costs in frustration." The country just doesn't want to hear. We've lost our faith in investing in the future.

Our illiteracy rate is rather high among civilized nations, isn't it? A fifth of Americans are essentially illiterate. Some, such as Jonathan Kozol, argue that the number is even higher—a third. Ironically, many of these illiterates have high school diplomas. Again, we're so enamoured of the symbol—graduation exercises, the diploma—we've lost track of what it's supposed to mean. So we allow the school machines to run: People move and go to class, to ninth grade and tenth grade—even though they can't read. The truth is so painful we can't face it.

Should we go with the flow and simply turn our colleges into high schools? And our high schools into grade schools? I think a lot of colleges *have* to be high schools. I don't think we should ever give up on a youngster. We can't say, "Well, this kid's illiterate, so we should stop teaching him because he's unworthy of our attention." If illiteracy is what the system produces, we must teach basic English in the junior year of college, and that's what's happening. We can't just give up.

You say there are no panaceas. But some people argue that our high schools should simply have higher standards, and they point to Japan and Europe. Are their standards that high, or is it apples and oranges? It's partly apples and oranges. It's partly that in some cultures there is more societal support for abstract academic learning than in others. If I were to pick the parents for the ideal high school, many might be Asian.

I'm not sure how closely we should be looking at Japanese and European models. As far as many of the problems of American schools go, we don't need research at all, we just need to be able to add and subtract and multiply. If we want a teacher to spend five minutes a week with each of 175 students, we multiply 5 by 175 and we divide by 60, and the result is, of course, an absurd number, a block of hours that few teachers can invest. And just for *five minutes a week* on a particular student's work!

Until we get those numbers down, let's not talk about assigning two pieces of writing a week. We don't have to cross the Pacific to realize American high schools have a problem—or to find a solution.

Reprinted by permission of the Alumni Magazine Consortium
© 1985 Johns Hopkins University

INFLUENCING YOUR CHILD'S SCHOOL: A Guide for Parents

by Nancy Delano Moore

What to do when your pre-kindergartner is reading at the sixth-grade level; your nine-year-old is bored and unhappy in school; or your thirteen-year-old wants to enter high school? Parents of intellectually talented youngsters often find themselves in the situation of wanting to do something for their children without knowing how to go about enlisting their schools' help. Schools *can* be encouraged to provide the challenging education highly able students need, and parents can influence them by gathering data about their child's particular strengths, uncovering the educational needs that result from those abilities, and exploring or creating appropriate ways of meeting those needs.

Gathering Data

The first step for parents is to identify the child's abilities. Let's take the example of the five-year-old, ready to enter kindergarten, who is enjoying reading *The Wizard of Oz*. Clearly, she needs work in higher-level skills; she does not need to learn the sounds letters make. Her parents found that independent testing by a professional confirmed that she was reading on the level of a sixth grader.

Expert opinion, the objective assessment of a professional, can be a helpful and worthwhile investment and a persuasive tool. Assessment provides objective data about the child's strengths. To find an expert to assess your child's development, you can request a referral from departments of psychology in universities, from centers for gifted children, and from other parents. Be sure when selecting an assessment service that the professional knows that he or she is being hired not just to assess the child's abilities and achievements but also to develop options and to represent the child's interest with the school.

Parents may want one or both of two types of assessment, psychological and educational. Psychological assessment is designed to evaluate the child's intellectual potential as well as his emotional and social well-being. Educational assessment looks at the child's actual level of achievement in school-related subjects, and at his or her learning style. With such information in hand, the parents can present a persuasive case on behalf of their child's abilities and needs.

Another option for assessment, especially for older children, is the Scholastic Achievement Test (SAT). The results of SAT's can testify to a youngster's exceptional ability. For example, with an SAT Math score of 630, a seventh grader scores well above the average college-bound senior. This score means that he or she has mastered the rudiments of Algebra I and is ready for Algebra II despite the fact that it is not usually offered to students his or her age. This student clearly needs the challenge of Algebra II so that he or she is not turned off by boring, repetitious work.

continued from pg. 10

Struck by the extreme isolation of these children, Owen also muses on the fact that the girls produced extraordinary literature in spite of (or because of?) the fact that no demands to do so were placed on them, whereas the boy experienced such great pressure to succeed that he turned to drugs and alcohol, with fatal results. The contrast with Owen, whose parents expect so little of him intellectually, is striking.

The friendship between Natalie and Owen deepens into romance. When the relationship founders, Owen wallows in loneliness and self-contempt, retreating into his fog after failing to find refuge in his imaginary island of Thorn. The novel ends on a more hopeful note without tying up all the loose ends too neatly.

This short novel can be read in one sitting, time enough to draw the reader close to the two main characters and to highlight the problems they face. Although the plot is sometimes predictable, the honesty and urgency of the narrator's voice and message are compelling. In fact, the novel would lend itself well to a television film in the vein of the movie version of Judith Guest's *Ordinary People*. Both novels plead for understanding of the uniqueness of each teenager. Students, parents, and educators can all learn from LeGuin's message that "true appreciation is the spur of genius."

Reviewed by GAIL E.J. LIPSITZ. Formerly assistant to the Deputy Director of CTY, she is now an editor with The Johns Hopkins University Publications. She has taught English in high schools and colleges in the U.S.A. and France.

LEARNING TO BE WRONG

by Elizabeth Bobrick Carter

Contrary to popular opinion, academic precocity is not its own reward. So-called 'gifted children' are almost always bored in school, often bewildered to find themselves labeled 'discipline problems' by intimidated teachers, and hurt by the teasing and resentment of their classmates. These problems are minimized, eventually, when the student enters college, but in the meantime, the gifted child is likely to have become mentally lazy, and freshman year is late in the game to fix this. The Johns Hopkins University Center for the Advancement of Academically Talented Youth (CTY) addresses this issue not by encouraging students to wallow in the poor-little-gifted attitude, but by congratulating them on their potential and providing them with an academic challenge. As part of this effort, I spent a portion of my Saturdays and summer vacations over a period of three years teaching classical languages at the college level to eighth, ninth and tenth graders. During the time they formerly devoted to sleeping late or watching cartoons, we discussed the fine points of word derivations and Latin syntax. To be sure, I wanted them to understand participles and the ancient Greek roots of medical terminology, but further, I wanted to show these extraordinarily talented young people what it meant to make something of their talents. To do this, both my students and I had to learn to respect differences while at the same time demanding that personal whims take second place to the subject at hand, the craft, the discipline. It was an important lesson for all concerned. As a former colleague of mine said, "If teaching these kids doesn't open you up, nothing will."

The notion that gifted children, like Rodney Dangerfield, suffer from no respect is admittedly comical but sadly true. The stereotypes of the academically precocious are accurate insofar as they approximate a representation of the response children give to lack of recognition by adults and peers: rebellion and/or withdrawal. This response

Influencing Your Child's School—continued from pg. 11

Finding out about other youngsters and how their parents have helped them can increase one's repertoire of ways to educate bright youngsters. In a support group for parents of gifted children, one mother wondered aloud how her daughter would schedule all the classes she wanted to take next year. In response to her question, another parent shared her daughter's experience: "Sara was a highly able tenth grader who liked Latin. Because she was taking advanced math classes at a local university, her high school schedule did not allow time for second-year Latin. We arranged with a tutor/mentor to teach Sara an hour a week, and we provided the transportation for the four months it took her to master the year's material. The school gave her no credit for the work, but placed her in Latin III the following year where she maintained an A average."

The options need to be within reason, but need not be those that are familiar to the school. For example, if one youngster who is very advanced in mathematics enters a rural high school, it is unreasonable to expect the system to hire a teacher just for him. However, it is reasonable to expect the school to make an appropriate class available to him, perhaps at the community college. Should that not be possible, the youngster should be allowed to proceed at his or her own pace in guided independent study. In no case would a suitable alternative be to force the youngster to repeat the class or to take no math for a year.

From these options, parents can develop an individual educational plan to meet the needs of the highly able student. Ideally, the chosen alternative will be compatible with the youngster's abilities and potential, as well as constructive, reasonable, and possible to put into effect. This alternative can be presented to the school.

Furthermore, do not underestimate the expert *within* your family. The gifted child can articulate his needs. One mother asked her unhappy frustrated nine-year-old what it was he wanted to learn in school. He told her, "I want to learn fractions." Together, they went to the school and told the teacher. Within a week, John was learning fractions. "He came home excited about math for the first time in a year," his mother said.

From these sources, and more, parents can gain a greater awareness of a child's needs and potential educational future. Once you have gathered information about and from your child, you are ready to begin the second step of exploring the educational options available to the child.

Discovering Options

Ways to discover these options abound. Investigating educational programs, reading about other youngsters, and talking with other parents—provided that the abilities and needs of the youth are indeed similar—will give you ideas about what can be done. For example, if a child's Montessori teacher says he is ready for early entrance into kindergarten, a visit to the prospective school for observation as well as conversation with his teacher-to-be will give the parents additional information with which to make a decision.

Influencing the School

Now that you, the parents, know more about your child's abilities and needs as well as more about what educational experiences are available, you are ready to begin the third important step: negotiating with the youngster's school. This will take time and energy. Some systems are not aware of the needs of the highly able student; others are not willing or not able to provide the educational environment so crucial to the well-being of these youths. Still others don't have time and/or personnel to develop creative ideas. Others insist they cannot increase curricular flexibility. It becomes the responsibility of the parents of highly able children to influence their systems by providing information and impetus for change.

A well-planned strategy will also be important. Before going to the school, identify a staff member who has an interest in gifted children, is in a position to help, and who wants to help. Make an appointment to talk with him or her. Success at this stage, particularly, demands tact on the part of the parents. Parents who, for example, focus on what the school has not done in the past will not have the same success as parents who share information and present alternatives when they ask the school for help. Go into the meeting with a possible solution, not just a problem.

Persistence is in order; you may not meet with immediate success. Many times, school personnel tell parents they cannot make an exception for a youngster for fear of setting a precedent. 'If we allow your child to skip Algebra I, everyone will want to do it,' they say. An appropriate response to this may be to suggest that the school set reasonable entrance standards for entry into Algebra II. Then, if others meet the criteria and want to skip Algebra I, they would be allowed to do so. Also, if the concern is that too many will be eligible for special treatment, you may point out that this is grounds for offering something special to all who are eligible.

A Success Story

These three steps, gathering data about the child, exploring the options, and negotiating with the school, were all elements of the method one family used to influence their school. Because Chris had high SAT scores as a seventh grader, he finished Algebra II at a program for highly able youth the summer after seventh grade. In his local school system, however, the middle school did not offer math above Algebra I. He and his parents decided that he would skip the eighth grade and go into high school. There, he could take math analysis and trigonometry along with typical advanced ninth-grade subjects. This seemed possible—the educational system was already in place. The youngster had the credentials and maturity to justify such a move. The real problem was that a twelve-year-old just didn't attend high school.

His parents' strategy was simple. Prepared to engage in whatever dialogue was necessary, they decided to go to the school with a request. They asked to enroll Chris in the ninth grade. Part of the strategy, too, was that once there they would refuse, courteously and resolutely, to take no for an answer. If one school official could not help them, they would ask to see someone who could. They became Chris' advocates, in the true sense of the word: they planned to plead the cause of their son.

During their appointment, the Director of Guidance was sympathetic to their situation, but he did not have the authority to enroll Chris. He offered to act as a liaison with an administrator who did have that authority. Later, he called to tell them that letters from professionals testifying to Chris' ability would be necessary before any decision was made. That day, letters testifying to Chris' exceptional ability went to the school from a psychologist who had assessed Chris and from an educational consultant at a prestigious university.

Several days passed with no word, so Chris' mother contacted the guidance director requesting an immediate decision. The school responded by suggesting a meeting with Chris and four adults he had never seen—the principal, the county math supervisor, the school psychologist, and the superintendent of instruction. They wanted to assess his "maturity level." Chris' parents refused. Despite being near panic—school began less than a week away, and Chris was not enrolled anywhere—they stood firm. They would not allow a meeting of any kind without one of them present. They reiterated their request to enroll Chris without further delay.

The next day, the school called to say that Chris would be enrolled as a ninth grader. The school's only stipulation was that a conference with Chris, the principal, and his parents take place. That offer was accepted, the conference was held, and Chris joined the other ninth graders the opening day of school. Now a college student, Chris remembers his high school years as successful and a necessary step to keep him purposefully involved in learning.

For Chris, and for other highly able youngsters like him, the time and energy his parents spent to influence his school produced valuable results. Parents who can act as advocates for their gifted youth will be able to guide their children and their schools to help them make better choices from wider opportunities. Working together with the school, you can help your own youngster and, at the same time, pave the way for highly able youth who follow.

NANCY DELANO MOORE, the liaison for CTY's Parent Advisory Board, is a consultant in gifted education with special emphasis on parenting and education options for the gifted. She is now working with Commonwealth Parenting Center in Virginia and served as a member of the Virginia State Advisory Board on the Gifted. She is a teacher in a tutoring program for students with special needs.

Learning to Be Wrong—continued

can be less than endearing, giving rise to the two most popular caricatures of the gifted child: 1) the unbearable smart-aleck whose overinflated ego makes him or her impossible to teach, and 2) the withdrawn 'nerd' who brings home too many books and too few friends. The great majority of CTY students do not fit into either category, but the strategy for helping both stereotypical cases—as well as that large number falling in between—is the same, namely, to provide a challenge; make expectations clear; show that mistakes are opportunities to learn more.

Unfortunately, some educators and parents equate a challenge with a threat. Some fear that this challenge, if unmet, can be too much for the budding ego of an adolescent. My answer, based on my experience at CTY, is that you cannot crush a youngster by allowing him or her to search for an identity. Many 'gifties', as they jokingly call themselves, come into classes thinking that they know a lot, and many of them are right. But few come in knowing what it is to have to work hard at learning. The realization that achievement does not come automatically with high potential gives these students a humility which is not self-deprecation, but which promotes self-assessment and self-respect.

This is serious talk, and CTY students do serious work. Nevertheless, visitors to our classes are always surprised at the high spirits shown by both teachers and students, the amount of laughter interspersed with the technical difficulties of second-year college German or expository writing. Because the emphasis placed on performance could get too heavy, one of the requirements for every CTY teacher (aside from mastery of his or her discipline) is a lively sense of humor and a genuine delight in the company of young teenagers. The typifying characteristic of the students I knew was *wit*. They were quick to pick up on jokes and word-play, but their wit was not confined to the humorous. They approached new ideas easily, and gave an open-minded consideration to the other point of view that could set an example for many a mature scholar. They could think on their feet, grasp a new concept and immediately

Learning to Be Wrong—continued from pg. 13

build on it. There are gradations of ability and interest even among the gifted. If I were to define the very best, I would say that, in addition to the above, they showed an intense dedication to getting it right, not to please the teacher or their parents, but to satisfy themselves.

Teaching these young people is not for the faint-hearted. In many ways, of course, they are the ideal students: they show improvement rapidly, they learn from each other and spur each other on, their motivation is high, they are not yet too cool to become fond of the teacher or to show it. My aim was always to be the best student in the class, but even the best student is not always right, and teachers who *have* to be right should look elsewhere. These students are hard to stay ahead of and impossible to bluff. One's mistakes are pointed out with some pleasure; for them, it's all part of the game. I used such occasions to demonstrate to the more timid members of the class that one could make a mistake and not die.

As for their more superficial characteristics, CTY students could not be picked out of a crowd. They pay the same almost morbid attention to having the right jeans, sneakers, and records as do others their age. Many appear athletic, and wear the letter jackets to prove it. They bring sci-fi novels, teen magazines, and comic books to class along with their trigonometry textbooks and sophisticated anthologies of fiction. They giggle, drink gallons of soda, and hang out in little bunches in the halls between classes.

ATTENTION:

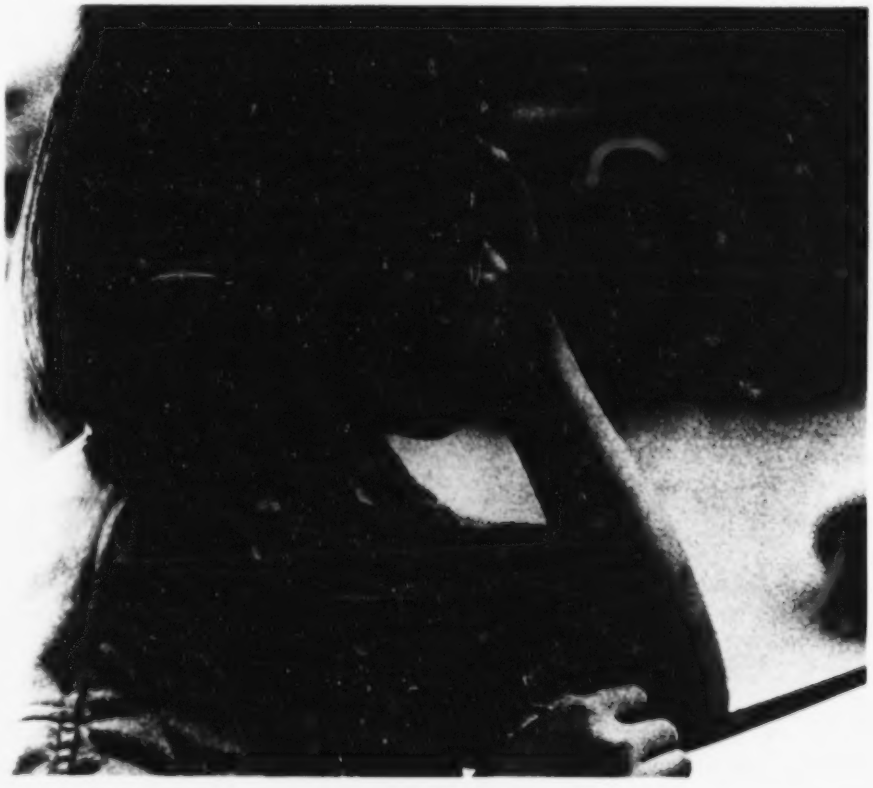
The Media and the Academically Talented Student

Soon after the curtain falls on the Annual Talent Search Awards Ceremonies, the CTY staff is besieged with calls from the media for names and SAT scores of the honorees. The CTY staff welcomes these calls because they provide an opportunity to boast about the results of the Talent Search.

Over 26,000 students from more than 3,500 schools in 19 states and the District of Columbia participated in this year's Talent Search. State and regional Awards Ceremonies are held to honor students who have scored well above the mean of the college-bound senior on the SAT and award them certificates from The Johns Hopkins University for their promising academic potential.

At these ceremonies CTY distributes press releases for students who may wish to place them in their local newspapers. The media may respond directly to these contacts without being screened by CTY. Only the names of those students (and their schools) scoring in first and second places in mathematics, verbal or combined scores in their state are published in the press release. Since this is public information, these students may also be contacted directly by the press.

In addition, magazine and television reporters and editors often call CTY for names of students about whom they can write or televise a "human interest" feature on the gifted child. CTY has a strict policy of not revealing telephone numbers and addresses of any students without first contacting the students and their parents. At no time are SAT scores of individual students revealed.



If you receive a call about being interviewed by the press or television about your CTY experience, you should take the name and telephone number of the reporter and then discuss the possibility with your family. If you decide to be interviewed, you may even wish to have a member of your family present during the session.

Is there any way to rehearse or prepare for the interview? After all, there are no lines to memorize, for you will be talking about your experiences, your observations, your ambitions, your feelings. You will not be caught off guard by questions about the "gifted," the "extraordinary," or the "privileged," if you draw up a list of possible questions you may be asked.

You might begin the "rehearsal" by asking yourself what sort of questions the media may have for you. Remember the time when a classmate called you "stuck-up" because you knew the answers to a problem no one else even understood? You didn't, of course, decide that you would never raise your hand again to answer a question in class unless you saw other hands raised—or did you? What will you say when the reporter asks you at what age you began reading—or not so incidentally, what is your I.Q.? How do you feel when you are told by your parents' friends that you are the future of the nation? Do you think you have the personal qualities of other kids your age—friendliness, emotional balance, a sense of humor? Is belonging to an elite group of students a social problem for you?

If you have attended the CTY academic year or summer programs, you will be answering questions not only about yourself but about dorm life, extracurricular activities, and conflicts, if any, with returning to your school curriculum. Inevitably you will be asked about your personal heroes and heroines, your hobbies, favorite movies, books, and rock stars.

These questions may not even turn up in the interview, but 'role playing' with a parent or sibling may bring to the surface attitudes and impressions the public has about the academically talented of which you may not be aware.

Remember that *you* are in charge of the interview in that you have the information the reporter needs to write his or her article. Be natural. Be candid. Be courteous. And if you should respond quickly to a question about your school and/or peers and then realize your answer may prove to be embarrassing, simply say, "Please don't print that."

Keep in mind that reporters are not only listening to what you say but are mentally recording your physical appearance. Your parents will no doubt recommend (or insist) that for this occasion you may not wear your jeans or sneakers that somehow missed the laundry chute for the past several weeks.

CTY participants tell us that they have enjoyed being interviewed because it was another new experience and the reporters were friendly and genuinely interested in talking with young students. Media interest helps CTY promote a celebration of the intellectually talented young students and support at every level for their advancement and recognition.

Yes, you have taken the SAT at an unusually young age, and you may be considering advanced coursework. You don't want to brag about it, but you do want to communicate and share an important and unique opportunity. Ruth Duskin Feldman, a Quiz Kid of the 40's—would probably pass on to you her mother's wise advice:

> "To be a person of distinction is certainly nothing of which to be ashamed, but rather a cause for honest yet modest pride, gratitude for being so favored…Use your position with dignity, and be an example of a person whose head hasn't been turned by fame. But don't make the mistake of bending over backwards with false modesty like Uriah Heep and his "umility"."
>
> (From *Whatever Happened to the Quiz Kids?*, Ruth Duskin Feldman, Chicago Review Press, 1982, p. 51)

MOLLIE LONGAKER is the Coordinator of Public Information for the Center for Talented Youth at The Johns Hopkins University. She was a training teacher at the University of California, Los Angeles, in the departments of English, Social Studies, and Student Government, and worked with parent organizations to bring innovative teaching methods to the classroom.

Learning to Be Wrong—continued

All of this takes place on Saturday, or during their summer vacation. No matter how much fun they are having, or how much they are learning, we are still asked, "Don't they want to do the things regular kids want to do?" Of course they do. But are the 'regular' things *necessarily* more important than intellectual development? I've lost several good students to music lessons, the marching band, soccer team, after-school jobs. We recognize that these are important parts of growing up. All we ask is that students be given a chance to make the choice, rather than be deprived of a choice altogether. Teenagers are put in a double bind: they are told that it's unnatural to want to do much besides goof off, and then, when it's time for them to take their place in the world of adults, their lack of self-discipline and motivation is loudly decried. This applies to every child as much as to the gifted.

Just as I am continually surprised at the abilities of the children in CTY, I cannot get used to the attitude that having high academic potential is enough—that such lucky students should be thankful and let it go at that. No one tells the superb athlete that all school teams are being disbanded because they're elitist—after all, only a few can join, depending on their ability—and likewise with the singer in the glee club, the trombone player in the band, the lead in the school play. Why is an aptitude for things academic singled out as being a sort of personal burden?

ELIZABETH BOBRICK CARTER, now Head of CTY's Humanities Program, taught Etymology and Latin for CTY from 1980-1983. She is a candidate for the Ph.D. in the Department of Classics at The Johns Hopkins University. A version of this article appeared in Psychology Today (June, 1983).

MARY FARRELL CAMERER

An Appreciation

A founding figure in The Johns Hopkins University's efforts to educate academically talented youth, Mary Farrell Camerer died unexpectedly in Baltimore on June 28, 1985. Her generosity of spirit, fineness of character, and dedication to students and learning helped form and guide what is now CTY through its early years.

In 1978, Hopkins initiated the Program for Verbally Gifted Youth (PVGY) to provide academic course work for high-scorers in the verbal section of the SAT. (Dr. Julian Stanley's Study of Mathematically Precocious Youth, SMPY, had been focusing on the mathematically talented since 1971. Mary's son, Colin, now a Ph.D. and college professor, was part of that program.) In PVGY's early years, Mary was the parent contact, registrar, supply officer, typist, guide of new faculty, recruiter, relentless external advocate and driving internal critic. PVGY started out with two teachers of German and two of Writing, and Mary, working with PVGY's first director, held it all together. She lived to see this tiny beginning grow into a nationwide effort involving many thousands of students annually. Even after she left the program in 1982, we automatically continued to rely on her guidance, her spontaneously offered material help, her ever-ready ear and willing hands.

When he gave Mary's funeral eulogy, her son Colin said, "For many naive parents of gifted children, and for the educators who help those children, our mother was an endless source of knowledge, advice, and imagination." She spent countless hours on the phone and at school meetings, day and night, with not only naive but anxious parents. PVGY, and then CTY benefitted from her experience as a parent who had once been bewildered by her child's extraordinary gifts. As someone relatively new to teaching and adolescents, I, too, quickly learned to turn to her. Mary helped me, and other teachers, to look at a troublesome student as a troubled student; to remember that parents have a hard job and are doing the best they can; to make time to listen and help, but not to imagine myself to be all-powerful—for good or ill; to give self-confidence to those who need it. Her wisdom was pragmatic, completely unsentimental and delivered with a glinty look from her bright blue Irish eyes, a characteristic long pull on her cigarette, and an emphatic motion of the index finger. She was glad to let you have it your way, but first she wanted you to see it through someone else's eyes; hers, for starters.

Mary did not equate doing the right thing with pleasing those around one. "Don't do it for Mom, don't do it for your teacher, do it for you", was her advice to students grappling with their own under- or over-achievement. She looked at the young people who came under her purview—and there were many—with love of what they were and of what they might yet be. She is survived by a living testimony of students and teachers who knew her as one who saw what was needed to make real learning possible and to make learning real. We were not the only beneficiaries; the Hopkins Department of Writing Seminars, where Mary was the chairman's Administrative Assistant, called on her considerable talents to the same degree. She gave unstintingly of her own stores so that we, too, could become givers.

Mary Farrell Camerer leaves us with a wish to be to others what she was to us. How else can one define the true parent, the true teacher?

Elizabeth Bobrick Carter

CTY announces the Mary Farrell Camerer Memorial Fund established by her family for scholarships for academically talented youth. Contributions may be sent in care of* Academic Talent. *All gifts will be gratefully acknowledged.

CTY
The Johns Hopkins University
Charles and 34th Streets
Baltimore, Maryland 21218
Center for the Advancement of
Academically Talented Youth

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Baltimore, MD 21218
Permit No. 1235

** C 1
*S JANET OSILL
COUNCIL OF EXCEPTION CHILDREN
1920 ASSOCIATION DR
RESTON VA 22091